Interview with Nancy Ostrander

The Association for Diplomatic Studies and Training Foreign Affairs Oral History Project
Women Ambassadors Series

AMBASSADOR NANCY OSTRANDER

Interviewed by: Ann Miller Morin

Initial interview date: May 14, 1986

Q: Would you tell me a little bit about your family background?

OSTRANDER: I was born in Indianapolis, Indiana. My mother's family was from Hancock County, Indiana. She was one of ten children, two of whom died when they were infants. They were farmers. My grandfather, her father, was a sort of self-taught lawyer and farmer. Sometimes I think it was my grandmother who did all the managing of the farm, however, while he did a lot of reading. As a matter of fact, I always thought it was very interesting that you could tell what he was reading when his children were born, because he named them all for the authors or characters. My mother's name was Guinevere, for instance. I even had an Uncle Montezuma and a Walter Scott. So you could tell the bent of his mind by just this sort of thing. But I think his early training of all of his children in reading was very important. The background there was British. My grandmother's name was Titus. My grandfather's name was Ham. Some Scotch Irish in there, also, I guess.

My father's family was Dutch in background. They settled in the middle of the 1600s, in New York.

Q: New Amsterdam?

OSTRANDER: New Amsterdam. That relative's name was Peter Peterson, but when he got off the boat in Brooklyn, he said, “We have a new life here, so I'm going to take a new name and I shall call us Ostrander,” which means “somebody from the eastern shore,” which, of course, Brooklyn was at the time. So all Ostranders to this day and age go back to him since it was an invented name.

There was a lot of tuberculosis in my father's family, so his father was told he should move west, which he did. They went out to Kansas, but then came back east when he seemed to be cured, and came back east to Indiana and settled there. So I guess an interesting comment is that my father died when I was still an infant, but I never knew that anyone in the family knew any Dutch, but when I went to the Netherlands in my career, my father's older brother wrote to me in Dutch. He said he remembered it as a child when his father had spoken it to him, and it wasn't bad Dutch! Of course, my experience in Holland and then later in Suriname, I thought maybe things come full circle here somehow because of the Dutch background in both places.

Q: That's very interesting. Did you have brothers or sisters?

OSTRANDER: No brothers or sisters, since my father died when I was just six months old and I was the only child. But Mother's family, with the eight living children, all had large families, so I had many, many first cousins and we were all brought up almost as if we were brothers and sisters.

Here's where the Foreign Service starts to come into play, I guess, because my mother's older brother was a military man and he had gone in the Spanish-American War. He had gone to Cuba. He took over the command in Santiago, Cuba, after the end of the war of 1898, took over for General Leonard Wood. Coming from a farming community in Hancock

County, Indiana, he wrote back to his two brothers and said, “Farming has never been so good. Why don't you come on down? You might want to get into this.”

So two brothers came down and they all entered the coffee business. Later the military uncle went on to the Philippines and the other uncle actually didn't do too well in the coffee business, but the one uncle stayed and remained in Cuba in the coffee business. He married a gal from Indiana, but she died soon after their baby was born, a girl named Eva Ruth. Eva was only six months older than I, and my uncle did not want to raise her in the mountains of eastern Cuba, so he sent her to my mother. So we grew up together.

Q: So you had a sister.

OSTRANDER: I had a sister and still do. As a matter of fact, we're probably closer than sisters because we were in the same grade in school.

Q: Do you look alike?

OSTRANDER: No, not a thing alike. Absolutely nothing alike. They used to call us Snow White and Rose Red. [Laughter] I haven't thought of that in years. Because I was very blonde and she was very, very strikingly dark, very beautiful.

Q: Did you live alone or were you living with your grandparents? Did your mother live with her parents?

OSTRANDER: The only grandparent alive when I was born was my mother's mother, and she came to live with us. I adored her. She died when I was six, but I remember her so well. I don't know how well my mother liked her living with us, because I'm sure it was difficult for her. I listen to my friends who say, “I wouldn't dream of telling my children that I would move in with them. I wouldn't dream of this imposition.” And I think, “You're depriving those grandchildren of something,” because of how much I just really loved having her around. Margaret Mead would say grandparents and grandchildren always get

along because you share a mutual enemy. Maybe she's right, but I still liked that. Graggy, as we all called her, died when I was six.

Q: So you grew up in a family of all women.

OSTRANDER: Except for all those cousins who lived with Mother when they went to university and this sort of thing.

Q: So you had male cousins living with you, too.

OSTRANDER: Oh, believe me!

Q: That's very nice.

OSTRANDER: In and out. But otherwise, I suppose that's probably true; I grew up with mainly women.

Q: It's very interesting and probably very important, too.

OSTRANDER: Eve's father, of course, came almost every summer and during this time many Cubans, because of this connection, came to visit us. Cousins were always going to Cuba. Cousins went to work with him in coffee. I was never one of those who got to go. As a matter of fact, when Eve came to live with us, my uncle sent with her a nanny named Esperanza, and Esperanza helped bring me up and is still my housekeeper out in Indiana, more years than I'd care to mention at this point. I had been told that the first language I spoke was Spanish because of Esperanza, and then my mother put a stop to that. You know, if you grow up in Indianapolis with an accent or speaking something else other than good old Hoosier English, people, in those days, anyway, would think you're a little odd. But I think my great interest in things international came from all of this, the Cuba connections, all of that.

Religious training. Mother was a member of the Christian Church, but then when she married my father, who was as Dutch Reformed as they come, we all became Presbyterians.

Q: Is that the same as Dutch Reform?

OSTRANDER: Yes. I'd hate to see this in print, but it was not ever my religion, and as soon as I could become an Episcopalian, I did. [Laughter] The Presbyterian Church's just a little stark for me.

Q: When you say your mother was in the Christian Church, is that actually a church?

OSTRANDER: Church of Christ. Is that it?

Q: Christian Science?

OSTRANDER: No, no. United Church of Christ? I don't know. Of course, she was a Presbyterian when I knew her. But we all, of course, every Sunday went to Sunday school.

Q: Was it perhaps a little too stark for you, that religion, a little too severe?

OSTRANDER: It's a little too unforgiving. Is that it? I'm not quite sure. The beauty of the Episcopal Church and the music and this sort of thing, the warmth of that, I felt.

Q: The pageantry?

OSTRANDER: I like pageantry because I find it very beautiful, but I think it's something deeper than that.

Q: I'm sure it is, but that would appeal to a child, don't you think, the choir and the vestments?

OSTRANDER: I was bored stiff with the Presbyterians, I think, if you get right down to it. [Laughter] That's probably it. It all seemed so social, and my mother was a very social person. It always seemed to me we don't go to church to praise God and for that sort of thing; we go for the social aspects of it. I think you need that, but it seemed to me it was a little one-sided there.

Q: Did your father leave your mother very well off?

OSTRANDER: Yes, but, of course, then came the Depression. In 1929 we lost everything, I'd suspect—of course, Mother never talked money to us, and I never had a feeling of want, probably because in the Depression there wasn't anybody who had money. Mother had gone to work after my father's death and she had gone to work as the private secretary of Harry Stutz in the Hoosier Motor Company.

Q: Stutz Bearcat.

OSTRANDER: That's right. You've got it! I remember her talking about tailor-made Dusenburgs. People would come up from Hollywood in the middle of the Depression and design $30,000 automobiles. It was really incredible. But that is early in the Depression days. It all came to a pretty awful end. I think Harry Stutz put a bullet through his head in about '30. I'm not sure of all those details. But anyway, then we lost all our money, too.

I'm not sure how Mother managed. She did go to work for the church as a secretary, and I can remember that she was paid two dollars a week. I was mortified late in life to learn that the local grocer had just simply never collected for groceries throughout that entire period. I was mortified about that until I learned that it wasn't just us; he had done it for the whole community.

Q: He was a saint, wasn't he?

OSTRANDER: I think so. Most definitely. I think that's pretty remarkable. Anyway, I did grow up never dreaming—of course, there was the farm and we had food from the farm.

Q: You lived outside the city?

OSTRANDER: We were living in Indianapolis, but there were still Mother's brothers and sisters living on the farm. I spent most of my summers on the farm, and what a wonderful background that is for a child. I don't think I ever realized until I went to the Executive Seminar of the State Department, and the first thing we were asked to do was to spend three days on farms in Nebraska. I thought, “Good heavens, I've joined the Foreign Service to get away from the farm, and now here I am, they're putting me back on the farm!” But I learned that nobody else in that entire Executive Seminar knew anything about farming except the Department of Agriculture man. I thought, “This is something that is so absolutely deep in my background,” and I loved it and I found it very valuable, but I never knew it was anything unique.

Q: You say you were not permitted to go to Cuba. Why was that?

OSTRANDER: [Laughter] No, it's just that Cuba was always coming to us. Later, when my uncle had a stroke—this would have been in the middle of the war—and it looked like he might not live, my mother did pack Eve up and they went to visit him. She felt that was important. But there wasn't enough money for me to go, too. And I don't remember that that disturbed me, because it was her dad, but it must have, because later, the day I graduated from college, I went to work to get enough money to go to Cuba. So I'm just wondering if somewhere in the background there wasn't something about, “Okay. If they can't pay for it, don't worry. I'm going to get there some other way.”

Q: Your mother's personality; here she was widowed at a very young age, with a baby . . .

OSTRANDER: Everyone thinks their own mother is a saint, and I'm convinced mine was, not so much just because of my own observations, but because I've never known anybody

who didn't think she was anything less than a saint. I don't think I competed with her, but there was no way I could ever do anything as well as she did it. I blame her for not being comfortable in the kitchen, because she was probably Indiana's best cook. There was no way, when she was around, that anybody was going to let me get out there and do anything!

Q: Was it easy for her to just do it and say, “You go away, Nancy?”

OSTRANDER: She wasn't a very good manager in the kitchen. She never wanted anybody around. As a matter of fact, she probably wasn't a very good manager. She always did things herself.

She finally, incidentally, did get a good job in the Depression years and was employed as an interviewer with the Employment Service. I've always been grateful to Franklin Roosevelt for those government programs. One of my earliest recollections about her is remembering her taking her rings off before she went to work, because she was talking to people who were desperate and she didn't want to rub it in. She just never wanted hungry people to see that she had rings, a diamond. So I thought that was pretty—

Q: Empathetic.

OSTRANDER: She was extremely considerate, always. She always was extraordinarily considerate of other people and sensitive to what they might feel. Even to this day—no, not to this day, but up until recently, whenever I would go into a restaurant in Indiana anywhere, people would come up and say, “You know, your mother got me my first job,” this sort of thing. When she died, the number of these people who remembered her and her consideration and her really personal touch in trying to get them jobs!

Anyway, she worked for the Employment Service. It was the Department of Labor then. I can't remember what they call it now. But anyway, she retired from there. One of my uncles had a very profitable paint factory in Indianapolis, and they needed someone to

help with the taxes and that sort of thing, so after she retired, she helped them out for a while. Then she finally did retire.

I don't know what else I can tell you about her. She was certainly a strong influence on my life. I've often thought since then what is it you can leave your children that is of any value. She certainly didn't have any money to leave! Well, she left me a house. But I don't think that's the important thing. I think whenever I met any sort of turning point or had any doubts about what I should do in life, I always asked myself what Mother would have wanted me to do and what she would have advised me to do, and I always know the answer. I know exactly! Now, I don't always do it, because she was capable of a lot more self-sacrifice and turning the other cheek and this sort of thing than I am, but I think it's important that there's never any doubt in my mind at all. I always know exactly. I think that's probably the best thing you can leave your children.

Q: Absolutely. Good values.

OSTRANDER: That's right.

Q: Did you look like her?

OSTRANDER: Some say no, but I think I look exactly like her! The older I get, the more I look like her, and I catch sight of myself nowadays in the mirror and my first thought is it's Mother, you know. I think, “No! It's you!” I do look very much like her. As a matter of fact, a lot of people just can't really see much of my father in me, except my father had a marvelous sense of humor and they talk about that a lot, and I certainly did inherit that, which is pretty remarkable, and it must be in the genes, since he died when I was so young.

Q: Did you have much to do with his family?

OSTRANDER: Yes. He had only one brother and one sister, a family in Philadelphia and a family in Memphis. I am very much in touch with my cousins. Of course, their parents are now dead.

Q: You have a large extended family, don't you?

OSTRANDER: Exactly. Mother insisted on that. Mother had three sisters. She was one of four. Those women I have learned to appreciate now, in looking back and trying to analyze it. They were so supportive of each other, it's really remarkable. I don't think a week went by, no matter where they were living, that they weren't all in touch, they all knew exactly what was happening in each other's lives, they discussed their mutual problems, and it was a real anchor to windward that they got from each other. I think Mother valued that so much, as did her own sisters, that they all insisted that we all know each other very well. Eve was an only girl, I was an only girl, my Aunt Estelle had three children and only one girl, and my Aunt Zoe had two children, only one girl. So the girls in the family, they really made sure that we all grew up together, and another uncle had only one girl. I must say I am close to all of them still.

Q: That's wonderful.

OSTRANDER: So we're all still alive and we're all in touch.

Q: That's great.

OSTRANDER: I think all of our mothers and, in the case of the uncle, I think they all insisted on this because it was so valuable to them.

Q: It sounds as if their mother was a remarkable woman if she instilled this in her children and not sibling rivalry.

OSTRANDER: She certainly did instill it, yes, that's for sure.

Q: She lived with you until you were six.

OSTRANDER: Yes.

Q: Were you sent to Philadelphia?

OSTRANDER: No. As a matter of fact, I remember going to Philadelphia only once, but since the background of my father's siblings was Indianapolis, they were there often. As a matter of fact, a granddaughter of the Memphis family lives here in Arlington [Virginia], and she has two babies. I'm with them, if not seeing them, at least in touch often. The daughter from Philadelphia was just down here two weeks ago and we had a long talk. She came to a conference and we didn't have a chance to see each other. The mother of this daughter, whose name is Margaret, is from Memphis, and we keep in pretty close touch. It's not easy. Of course, she comes to see her daughter here in Arlington and I talk to her then and see her then. As a matter of fact, last summer I went over to the Mellon to an art exhibit there, and this gal looked at me and said, “Is it Nancy?” Of all places to bump into the cousin from Memphis! I said, “I didn't even know you were in town.” She said, “I was going to call you tonight.” Anyway, that's still pretty close.

Q: You felt closer to your mother's side of the family, though?

OSTRANDER: Yes, probably so, probably because she did.

Q: She never remarried?

OSTRANDER: No, she never remarried.

Q: But you have good psychic roots, obviously.

OSTRANDER: She was so much in love with my father that I certainly think that's one of the things that I grew up understanding—love, admiration. I mean, the sun rose and set. There wasn't any sadness—well, sadness, yes, I suppose—but it was just sort of a given.

I was a very jealous child, I think. I suspect I wouldn't have welcomed somebody else. I don't know if I would have or not. There was one man I really thought she was going to marry, and this was when she was in her forties. Then he died, too. I think she had turned him down, deciding it was too late.

Q: Did your father die suddenly, Nancy, do you know?

OSTRANDER: Yes. He had tuberculosis, as a matter of fact, and committed suicide because he was dying of tuberculosis, so it was pretty brutal.

Q: How terrible for a young woman. She couldn't have been very old.

OSTRANDER: Thirty-two, something like that. So it was pretty tragic all the way around. I do remember, growing up, that it didn't make any difference as the years went on, my complete understanding of how much in love she was, still.

Q: And she wouldn't take second best. At what point did your cousin Eve come to visit? Is it Eve or Eva?

OSTRANDER: Her name is Eva Ruth. “Evie Woof” is what I called her, I guess, as a child. She now goes by Eve. She was sixteen months old when she came to us. I was, of course, then ten months old.

Q: Your mother had two babies.

OSTRANDER: Two babies.

Q: Of course, she had her mother there.

OSTRANDER: And Esperanza.

Q: Did the death of your grandmother have much of an effect? You were pretty young to have a death of somebody you loved so much. That's young to have death overtake you.

OSTRANDER: I don't remember it. I remember the stories. They sent us to an aunt because Mother knew that her mother's life was coming to an end. So we were sent over to stay with my aunt during that time. I think I must have suspected something, not really understanding, because when I did come back, Mother told me that I went running through the house saying, “Where is my Graggy?” But I don't remember that. I never felt insecure, ever! Suffocated perhaps by all of these relatives. No, suffocated isn't the word. It was just a great deal of support.

Q: And they were admiring people, I gather.

OSTRANDER: Mother used to quote my father as saying, “If you don't think the Hams (my mother's family name) are good, just ask them.” And I must say I grew up with that. Absolutely outstanding folk. [Laughter]

Q: That's great.

OSTRANDER: I think it is. As a matter of fact, I think it's very important for you, no matter what your roots are, to convince your children that they are a cut above. Therefore, I think you try to live up to something.

Q: It has to be instilled early, don't you think, for a child to really feel this?

OSTRANDER: I worry about the children in the ghetto who are probably taught that they're not.

Q: That they're trash.

OSTRANDER: That's right. They hear it from all sides, so you become it, don't you?

Q: Of course you do. Tell me about your childhood as far as your physical health goes. Are you a person with a lot of energy? Did you always have good health, or were you ever ill as a child?

OSTRANDER: I suspect they worried about me terribly in the early years because of the tuberculosis. I'm sure I'm fat to this day because they just stuffed milk and food and everything down me when I probably didn't need it, except that I was skin and bones up until my teens. They were really concerned about it. I didn't have any appetite. Oh, I long for the days that I didn't have any appetite! [Laughter]

I had the usual childhood illnesses—measles, mumps, a lot of intestinal flu and always problems with ears, all of those things that children no longer have because of the antibiotics. Tonsils out at the age of five. A great-uncle took them out. I remember that very well. It was in Hancock County.

My grandmother, as if ten children wasn't enough, took in her mother's youngest child because he was the age of her own children. This is out on the farm. You can always have room for one more out there. So mother grew up not only with her own seven brothers and sisters, but with this uncle who was my grandmother's younger brother; he was Uncle Doc. He became Uncle Doc later. He was a doctor. Mother had such great faith in him that whenever there was anything to be done, he was the one that she wanted to do it. I've heard stories of when she was eighteen and visiting a sister who was living in Brookline, Massachusetts, and got appendicitis, and would not let any doctor touch her unless Uncle Doc came from Indiana to do it. It burst and they almost lost her from peritonitis because of it. But it was that strong, her faith in this man! Anyway, Uncle Doc took out my tonsils, and I remember that very well, being given ice cream and how good it felt. They don't do those things anymore.

Q: What kind of games did you play in the city and out on the farm?

OSTRANDER: On the farm we rode horses. I haven't been on a horse since I was twenty-one. I love horses to this day, but I have no desire ever, ever again to get on the back of one. When I was thinking about this, just the other day, as a matter of fact, because one of the cousins that we always spent time with on the farm and who later raised horses of her own; she's three years older than I am and would hop on a horse at this moment if you brought one in the room, couldn't understand why I no longer wanted to get on one. When I look back on it, I think I always liked to admire the horses more than I liked to ride them. As much as I wanted to be athletic, it just wasn't there.

Q: Low energy?

OSTRANDER: Maybe no muscles. I don't know.

Q: Did you play much with your boy cousins?

OSTRANDER: They were older and they wouldn't have anything to do with us. I can remember one. Joe used to put Eve on one shoulder and me on the other. He played guitar, and still does. He'd walk up and down the street playing the guitar with us riding. Of course, I see him all the time still. But it was always Eve and my cousin Peg and I who spent the summers together on the farm, because we were more the same age. There were other women cousins, but they were older. Our mothers always got us there to the farm at the same time.

Q: Did you play dolls and dress-up, that type of thing?

OSTRANDER: I don't remember playing dolls on the farm. As a matter of fact, it wasn't all play on the farm. I can remember being told to go out there and pick an acre of beans. I don't like green beans to this day. We did the work before we ever got to play. Very good training. And you never just got on a horse; you curried them and you took care of the tack and everything else.

Q: Maybe that's why you don't like to ride. [Laughter]

OSTRANDER: [Laughter] That's possible! I'd rather go look at them rather than anything else.

So we never bothered with dolls; there was simply too much to do on the farm.

Q: Did you have a chance to swim?

OSTRANDER: Since Mother had to work on Saturdays, she was always looking for places to stash us. The Y was one of the places she stashed us, and I think I took every lesson that the Y had to offer. I learned to swim. We also joined the Hoosier Athletic Club, which I remember. That was with school chums I went there, a group of mothers who also wanted to stash their girls on a Saturday morning. I took ballet dancing, gymnastics, tap dancing. I just went through the whole business and loved it.

Then we would go early in the morning on Saturday. The Y was downtown, and then we would walk to Mother's office and get there just as she was finishing work, and then she would bring us on home. Mainly that was with school chums. We did play dolls. As I was growing up, I remember playing dolls and paper dolls. We played a lot of paper dolls. Do they do that still?

Q: Not much. Not the way we used to.

OSTRANDER: Oh, it turned your imagination! Of course, they've got the TV now. It turned your imagination loose.

Q: They dress dolls, but they don't seem to put them through routines.

OSTRANDER: I can remember in the Depression years that we would either get dolls for Christmas or else Mother would re-dress and do complete outfits for our dolls. I would hear

her sewing. Poor woman! Here she is working all day, and I would hear her at two and three in the morning.

Q: Isn't that lovely.

OSTRANDER: But she loved it. She much preferred to do that than be down there at the office. At Christmas, again, as I go back, I don't think we had anything much, but I don't have any sense of ever being deprived at all, but again, nobody had anything and nobody ever thought it was going to be permanent. So I think that takes the pressure off somehow.

Piano lessons. There was a family at the corner whose father had gone bankrupt. They were a big family and didn't have any money. That was another thing that my mother did. Whatever she needed to have done, if it was babysitting or piano lessons or whatever, she didn't pay them very much, but she always found somebody who really needed it. So since I wasn't about to practice that piano, she would hire the daughter in this family to come and sit and listen to my piano practicing every day for an hour. She'd pay her just a tiny little bit. But those girls are still grateful. All the members of that family, I'm still in touch with them, and they still think Mother was a saint.

Q: Isn't that a lovely idea!

OSTRANDER: But what brought it to mind was that I lived in a neighborhood of young boys and the boys were always out there, while I was having to practice, in my yard playing softball. I couldn't stand it until I could finish and get out there after my hour. The hour seemed forever, you know, to go out there and play softball. I remember that the lilac bush was first base, the plum tree was second base and the box-elder was third. We had a marvelous time. We played tennis in the street.

Q: With the boys, too?

OSTRANDER: Yes, of course, when they would put up with us. They were so mean to us, to the girls in the neighborhood, you know.

Q: Did your little cousin Eve take piano lessons, too?

OSTRANDER: Oh, of course. Of course! It's interesting. I have decided that she and I together, and to this day, are one perfect person. What I'm good at, she isn't, and vice versa. I can remember we would sit down at the table to dinner. What I would eat, she wouldn't. I'm sure we were just looking for our own individuality. Mother, incidentally, decided that we should not go to university together, and sent us to different schools. I think that was a very smart thing to do, because we did rely on each other and do now.

Q: Did you join the Girl Scouts?

OSTRANDER: Oh, yes!

Q: Or 4-H?

OSTRANDER: Girl Scouts.

Q: When you played, how would you categorize yourself as a little girl? Would you say you were a very feminine little girl or a tomboy or somewhere in between?

OSTRANDER: I would never say I was a tomboy. I was terribly shy.

Q: Oh, really?

OSTRANDER: I know people don't believe that, and every now and then I get a fit of shyness still today and really have to fight to overcome it, and people just simply don't understand that. Maybe I don't either. I was painfully shy. I needed all kind of support. I wouldn't speak up. I hated the limelight. In the first place, Eve was always so perfect. [Laughter]

Q: Perhaps she felt the same about you.

OSTRANDER: I'm sure she did. In school we were constantly compared, and I always seemed to be on the short end of the stick. People adore her, you know. She was beautiful and she has this kindness of my mother and her consideration. She makes everyone feel how absolutely important they are, whereas I was just struggling, I suppose, on the intellectual side. That's another thing. I suppose I had a lot of interests in school and they were never going deep enough into subjects in grade school for me and would never let me go off on my own tangents. I can remember absolutely a new life opened up for me in the seventh grade when they first started teaching Latin and languages. Ah!

Q: You like languages?

OSTRANDER: I went on to major in foreign language in college, and it just was a whole new thing for me. Whereas Eve would be going around and getting very social and making everybody's acquaintance and very socially active, and I'm in a book, you know.

Q: Can you remember any of the books you used to like when you were young?

OSTRANDER: I suppose I did all the Bobbsey Twins and Nancy Drews, and I read every dog story that there was that was ever written and The Jungle Book, the Kipling stories. The other day I was on a plane coming back from somewhere, and we stopped in Florida, in Orlando where Disney World is. I was sitting there on the plane, and all the passengers started to get off, and there was a little girl about eight years old. She was coming on, holding a book just like this. She stopped right in front of me because she couldn't get through. I said, “What's your book?” She said, “I've found the most wonderful story that was ever written!” I said, “Oh, what is it?” And it was Little Women. I thought, “Oh, life goes on!” you know, because, of course, Little Men, Little Women, I was entranced with those books, too. Anyway, it gave me a great feeling of continuity. I thought, “Well, life isn't all

TV," because she had stars in her eyes. That's the way I used to feel about those books, too.

We went to the library every day from Public School 57—not every day. Anyway, occasionally during the week we went to the library. It was an old house and I loved that old house. They've torn it down and built a modern building, and I think all the romance went. The children's books were upstairs and the adults' books were downstairs, or vice versa, but I can remember that I had just exhausted the children's side of it and kept thinking, "How long before they'll let me go upstairs and pick a book?"

Q: You were proud of that library card.

OSTRANDER: Loved it! Of course, I suppose it all goes back to Mother. Mother read so much and, of course, we go back to my grandfather on that side. To all of his children he taught the value of reading. When later in the Foreign Service I did a year giving the Foreign Service Officer oral exam, at the end of that year I tried to put some strands together. You know, what it is that makes the successful candidate? One of the things I noticed was that every last one of them was a reader and just devoured everything in print that came into sight. I'm certainly not that way anymore. I read here at work, all the newspapers—not all, surely, but sometimes it seems all the newspapers, at least four or five. So when I get home, I'm not really inclined to dive into anything to read. It's much easier just to flip on the TV.

Q: But it's been a very important part of your life.

OSTRANDER: Most definitely.

Q: Do you have a collection of books you used to lug around with you?

OSTRANDER: Of course, and I finally just had to turn a lot of them over to the bookstore downstairs, because as a single person in the old days, you didn't get much allowance. It's

better now, of course, but it just got so it was going to be furniture or books. There are a bunch of them that I cannot give up and they always go everywhere with me.

Q: Was there a particular category of books you liked, such as poetry?

OSTRANDER: Yes. How did you hit it? I am a poetry reader, and poetry sticks in my head very easily so that I can dredge it back up, and lines of poetry come to me out of the blue sometimes. When I was at the Executive Seminar, I didn't know anybody else did that. Peter Moffat, who was our Ambassador to Chad, he and his wife, we all became friends. One day I noticed that Peter was reciting poetry and I said, “For heaven's sakes, here's a fellow poetry lover.” I did not know other people remembered poetry. I love to read poetry and have many, many poetry books; a lot of gardening books, too, since I like to garden.

Q: Who are your favorite poets?

OSTRANDER: T.S. Eliot, of course. You know, I used to read the American poets. I mean, Longfellow, that sort of thing.

Q: Robert Frost?

OSTRANDER: Oh, of course. How could you not? I got turned on to—they're not modern anymore, but they were modern when I went to college, to the modern American poets and British poets in college. I took a bunch of courses in literary criticism and in contemporary drama and contemporary poetry and e.e. cummings and W.H. Auden and William Butler Yeats and that sort of thing. So I don't think that I prefer the moderns to the old ones; it's just that it was something I hadn't read up until that time. If it's poetry, I'm going to like it. Let's face it.

Q: How about the romantics, Keats and Shelley?

OSTRANDER: Oh, huge volumes of their work! Yes, most definitely. Since I do know some foreign language, I find I even like poetry in foreign languages. I had a good German

teacher who taught me to appreciate German poetry, and I've long since forgotten a lot of German, but I haven't forgotten the poetry. It sticks somehow. I read a lot of early Spanish poetic works. Spanish is really a language for poetry. It's just made for it, that's all there is to it. It just is beautiful. I won't recite any of it to you. [Laughter]

[Reading aloud] Early ambitions. I can remember at one time saying I wanted to learn Dutch, and I must have been in about the eighth grade. I suppose that was just thinking back to my father's family. Later on, the last thing in this world I ever wanted to learn was Dutch—this was when I was in the Netherlands—because it usually meant that you were going to get assigned to Indonesia immediately thereafter. So I stopped that. But then later on I did learn Dutch.

[Reading aloud] Ambitions and expectations of parents. In my era, women were consumers rather than producers, unless they were producing children, and you were just really expected to sort of bide your time until “Mr. Right” came along and then produce a nice sizable family and bring them up right. I was taught that along with everybody else. I think girls in my day were protected a lot more than the boys were, except that I don't really feel that we were not given our independence or our freedom. I suppose it was kind of built in, certain things that you do and certain things that you don't do, so that you won't attract dangerous situations. Maybe they still teach the girls that; I don't know. Sometimes I wonder. But I don't think the boys were taught those things. As a matter of fact, “Go out there, son, and get yourself in a mess and learn to be a man. Come home beat up.” [Laughter] I don't think I would have been a very good mother, because I would have taught them to avoid that.

But those were the expectations. I suppose that's what I expected. I don't think I ever had any doubts whatsoever that I would marry. I think I learned very early on that it probably wasn't going to be the guy next door. I found him pretty boring.

Q: Obviously you're very bright. At what point did you realize this?

OSTRANDER: I realized very early that I was scholastically—no, no, in high school I wasn't, really. I got a scholarship to the local university, Butler, but my grades were all right, good enough to get a scholarship, but I certainly wasn't honor roll every time.

Q: Was that intentional?

OSTRANDER: I suppose. I don't know. I can remember in grade school there was a bunch of about ten gals and we all still see each other and we all still have a great deal in common, and tried to analyze that last summer. One of my friends said, “I think it's because we share a sense of values that's never changed that our folks all gave us, living in this small community.” It's a big city, but I was in a suburb of a big city, and really all those same values were instilled in all of us, so I think that's a very good tie. I don't think it ever changes.

What was I talking about?

Q: We were talking about the boy next door, the one that you weren't going to marry.

OSTRANDER: In grade school with these girls, the teachers, used to talk to the parents of all of this bunch of about ten girls, and tell them, “They're really a bunch of busybodies and always into mischief and all kinds of things, but they are all extremely intelligent. It's very difficult for us to keep ahead of them, and that's probably the reason that they're always into mischief.” When I look back on the mischief, it was tying shoe laces together, gym shoes, and throwing towels into the shower, something that would never be considered mischief [today]. It was so mild. We used to change classes when I was in junior high school, and somebody who was absolutely scholastically perfect would be selected to ring the chimes. I never did it.

Q: Never rang the chimes? [Laughter]

OSTRANDER: Never rang the chimes, but I knew the gal who did. She was absolutely perfect, there was no doubt about it. One day I changed the chimes, moved them, four chimes, and they were to do the Westminster thing. So when she rang them, it was all strange, and that was really daring.

Q: You say this girl was perfect.

OSTRANDER: She made perfect grades.

Q: But was she dull?

OSTRANDER: No, she wasn't dull at all, except that we considered her pretty nicey-nice. She told me the other day, when I saw her not too long ago, that she had taught her children not to be that. She said, “I always did everything that my mother told me to do and I realize I missed a lot.” [Laughter] No, we all loved her, but we always knew that she would never have changed those chimes. Never.

Anyway, that's the first news that I had that we were intelligent at all, when the teachers told this.

Q: You didn't feel different from the other girls?

OSTRANDER: No. As a matter of fact, most of them were gifted. Several were gifted musically; I wasn't. I had a great interest in all of this stuff, but I was not creative at all. But almost every one of these girls, except me, was really creative in some way or form. One of them sewed magnificently and could recreate a dress design. This was very early on. One played the harp. Another two, the violin. And there I was loving music, but not really—you know, the world is going to be a better place if I listen rather than perform. [Laughter] I was very well aware of that, except Mother kept up those music lessons forever. I think it was probably good, because my appreciation continued to grow, although I didn't get any better.

Q: Did you have any mentors among your teachers, especially when you got to the stage when Latin became important to you, and languages?

OSTRANDER: Not particularly just for me, but I think this group of eight or ten was pretty favored in that grade school. They sort of tried to take all of us and to encourage us, and they followed us—that is, our careers and this sort of thing. I hear from one of those teachers still.

Q: Any of them you particularly looked up to and wanted to be like?

OSTRANDER: Some of them were really awful, you know, when you get right down to it. The language teacher, yes, I appreciated very much. She also taught music. Again, we're still back to comparing me with Eva, and they all did that, so I really didn't encourage too close an association. They thought she was really—and she was—she's really a pretty exemplary person. But I didn't appreciate being compared. For one of these particular teachers, I can remember doing an absolutely beautiful job on a project that she gave me, and she called me up and wanted to know if Eva had done it. My mother went down there to that school and just tore the place apart. The teacher couldn't really believe that this shy little creature had produced this. Actually, the truth was the other way; I had done Eva's, too. Mother didn't tell her that, but that teacher never did that again. But I always worried about those things. If you knew Eva, you would understand. She is really exemplary and would never put anybody else down. Everybody just adores her.

Anyway, so we went to high school, and I don't really remember too much about high school. Why is that? Do a lot of people remember everything about their high school? Because it was the same bunch of girls, we all went on, and fellows, too. We all went on to high school, but, of course, it was a much bigger place. It was a brand-new high school. It was a proud thing to be going there. My language teachers really did think I was something, I must say, and I did have mentors in that group. I kept right on taking Latin.

Q: You loved Latin?

OSTRANDER: And still do. I wish I knew Italian, because it's as close as you're ever going to get. I find it beautiful.

Q: Did you anticipate you'd go on to university?

OSTRANDER: Oh, yes. There was never any doubt of that. I never knew where the money was going to come from, but there was never any doubt that I was going to get there. I started to work during holidays and summers and Christmases as soon as you can, and I think that's sixteen. I'm not sure. Those were pretty awful jobs.

Q: Where did you work?

OSTRANDER: I can remember working for the local florist, and I never went back there after one Easter. It was a large family and they all thought that they ran it, and they would all give you conflicting instructions. It was a good management lesson very early on. I never went back there, although it wasn't bad for the Easter or Christmas holidays, whatever it was. I worked at the local largest and best department stores, selling better sweaters. I enjoyed that. I got a good taste for cashmere. I never bought any, though. Couldn't do that.

During the summer before college, I went to work for Lane Bryant Mail Order House. A lot of us went to work for Lane Bryant, which was in Indianapolis. I think it still is. It's not in the same place, though. What you did was file addressograph cards. It was a strange place to work. When we worked the full week, that's six days, eight hours a day, which would include a little bit of overtime because of the extra day,;we were paid eighteen dollars. We even opened the letters that came in, and separated money and this sort of thing. They wouldn't let us sit down to do any of this. Mr. Frank, I remember, was our supervisor. He never let us sit down. Anyway, it was a lot of these same girls that I've told you about that went through school together, but also I met some girls at that place who later I went

to university with. Every time we all see each other, we say, “Do you remember that job at Lane Bryant's?” I look back on it and I realize not everybody was going to hire us at that age, knowing that we were going to go to school in the fall. So I guess we should be grateful to them. It also taught me what job not to get after that.

The war was on at this point, and during the war I worked for the Indianapolis Power and Light Company. During the war they didn't read your meter every month; they read your meter every other month. So on the alternate month it was estimated. You looked back and you added one meter reading and one estimate and came up with an estimate for the next month. That is what I did, and I still can look at any two figures and give you an average without any brain power, without any work at all. It was just page after page of meter books, looking at those two numbers and getting the average, and that would be your next month's bill. So I did that summers and then tried to do it during the winter, too, part-time in the afternoon when I was going to college. I finally had to give it up; it was just too much.

But on the average, I would say that what I managed to do was with the scholarship, summer jobs, and part-time jobs, to pay for one semester a year at the university and my clothes. That left only the other half for my mother to have to pick up, and it wasn't easy for her. I'm sure she went well into debt for that. Although it wasn't all that expensive. Well, everything is comparative.

Q: Sure, if you're only making eighteen dollars a week.

OSTRANDER: Oh, dear. I remember those days. By the time 1947 came around, which was my last year in school, the boys were coming back from overseas. That was the first we had seen of any men for quite some time. They poured in, all under the G.I. Bill, and I was asked to teach a course in Shakespeare because they just couldn't keep up with the number of students. So I taught that bunch of elderly—they were to me at the time—veterans who couldn't have cared less about William Shakespeare and were just trying

to get through as fast as they could. I had to try to teach them Shakespeare. It was quite an experience. They would try to date me, and that's all right. Who cares? But it was an interesting experience. The actual professor who taught that class did become sort of a mentor, and I still have a lot of books that she gave me. I always helped her. I graded all her papers, too.

Q: I presume you had dated a lot in high school.

OSTRANDER: Not really.

Q: It wasn't the pattern there?

OSTRANDER: No. Again, it was a bunch of boys and a bunch of girls, and we all sort of mixed in together. Quite a few paired off. I wasn't one of those.

I graduated from high school in 1943, so those last two years of high school, they were taking the boys away pretty fast. Believe it or not, they were volunteering and there were even some deaths, which was pretty tragic, among our own group.

Then when I got to university, from 1943 to '47, there were just simply no men. That's all there is to it. We did have the Air Force at the school, but we were not really encouraged to mingle.

Q: They didn't go to your classes?

OSTRANDER: No, they had their own. We had mixes, dances and this sort of thing. But you know, Ann, they died so fast. They were learning gunnery. It was a gunnery school and they were tail gunners. I think the average life of a tail gunner was five minutes.

Q: I know. I know.

OSTRANDER: A lot of the gals really got into this very deeply, and I just got so—well, I'm not very good at mixes, anyway. I was still shy at that time. But I did date some of these guys. Quite frankly, I just lost interest in getting to know somebody that the next thing you knew, you were going to see his name on the casualty list, and it did work that way. Maybe that was an excuse. I don't know. But I just wasn't really one for—Mother sent me down to the USO, too, and I hated that. It was almost like being in some sort of line-up. The guys would come and pick you off the line-up and this sort of thing. That's not my style. I'm not that easy going, and I always felt like I was on display and I was probably going to be rejected, too. I think that's probably the bottom line. I was scared to death at the USO that I was going to be rejected.

Q: Well, you were a teenager.

OSTRANDER: That's true. Most of us were.

Q: The war had quite an effect, then, on your life.

OSTRANDER: Oh, I would say most definitely yes. One of these cousins that I'd grown up with was killed on December seventh [1941] in the Marine Corps, out on Midway Island in the Pacific. I cannot remember ever looking at a casualty list, which, of course, was in the paper every day, that I didn't know at least the family of somebody. Of course, the university was depleted of men. It was like going to a girls' school. We had a lot of divinity students. Nobody ever took them seriously, for some reason.

Q: Conscientious objectors, I gather.

OSTRANDER: I suppose. I don't know. Maybe so. I don't know if they were conscientious objectors or if they got deferred until they finished divinity school or something.

Q: Did you do any Red Cross work or give blood or anything like that?

OSTRANDER: I was an air raid warden! Does that help? [Laughter] That was when I was in high school. God help us if we had ever had an air raid. I learned to identify all the planes by silhouette. I wonder if I could do that yet. I think I'd know a B-17 anytime I saw one, maybe even some Messerschmitts and Stukas. I don't know.

Q: Did you have to get up on a tower and look out?

OSTRANDER: Oh, yes! We actually did that. It was all mock, of course. When the air raid sirens came, we put on our hard hats and our armbands. As a matter of fact, I found one of those arm bands in the attic the other day.

Anyway, we were giving our best. We saved aluminum cans, tin cans. I think it was tin at that time.

Q: And gum wrappers.

OSTRANDER: Right. Exactly. We smashed the cans, turned them in, and any old rubber tires and this sort of thing, went to those rallies, bought war bonds. I can remember in 1941 we went to the High School cafeteria. It was a sizable high school in those days, but would not be considered sizable now. We were all called on December 8 [1941], I guess it was, and we all sat in the cafeteria and heard the Roosevelt speech declaring war, asking for the declaration of war. That is vivid in my mind. I can see it. Although I don't remember too much about high school, I do remember that.

I remember, in high school, the teachers being drafted, and, again, some of these girls getting together and sending them food and things from home, from their students, which I think we thought up by ourselves. I don't think anybody suggested that. I think it was really appreciated. Some of the male teachers that we were crazy about.

Not too many more war recollections. All of my male cousins were gone—well, most of them, they were of the age.

Q: And one was killed.

OSTRANDER: One was killed on Pearl Harbor Day.

Q: You mentioned something about a sorority?

OSTRANDER: Yes.

Q: In college this was?

OSTRANDER: Right. My mother's sorority. I was a legacy.

Q: Your mother was a university graduate?

OSTRANDER: Not a graduate. She only went two years. My grandfather, by the way, with his eight children, got them all two years of college. Of course, he put the oldest boy through West Point. I don't think any of the others graduated, but all of them had the equivalent of two years at university. I just think it's remarkable. Of course, that's the reason I always knew I would do four.

Q: Of course. That was remarkable.

OSTRANDER: Right.

Q: So you were in your mother's sorority.

OSTRANDER: Yes.

Q: Did you live there at the house?

OSTRANDER: The first year I didn't. I didn't see how Mother could afford it. Then it was time to fly out of the nest, and so I asked, please, if I couldn't in my second, third, and fourth years. I don't know how she managed that, but I did. It was clear over on the other

side of town, which was a good fifteen miles from home, and it wasn't easy to commute when you couldn't have cars or anything. This was the war. I was in a car pool, and I think I drove. We had a C ration [gasoline], was it called? It was type C, which was nothing. But I drove once a week and Mary McNutt—do you know the name McNutt?

Q: Paul McNutt?

OSTRANDER: Paul McNutt's niece from Indiana. Mary McNutt. I haven't thought of her in a hundred years! She drove one of the days. We had a pool going. We only had to take the bus a couple of days, but it was very hard.

Q: That was your first year?

OSTRANDER: That was my first year. So after that, then I moved into the house. I loved it! Absolutely adored it. I've known so many girls who didn't like their sororities at all. I adored mine and practically everybody, and just enjoyed that to the hilt. But the day I graduated, I was finished with it.

Q: At what point did you change your church?

OSTRANDER: This was a sore point at home.

Q: I can imagine.

OSTRANDER: I might as well have taken the veil. So I didn't take any action until I was twenty-one. That is, I didn't really let Mother know that I wasn't going back into the Presbyterian Church. At the age of twenty-one, I told her and she made me go tell the minister of the church. I thought that was pretty ridiculous. But anyway, she felt I owed him that. I don't think he cared, really, that much. But by that time I had left home and she didn't really know what I was up to.

Q: During college days, did you go to the Episcopalian Church?

OSTRANDER: Yes, I did. I was moving around. I was trying them all. I think I really did pick during the college days, picked the Episcopal Church, but I didn't really act on that until I was in Cuba. In my first post in Cuba, there wasn't an Episcopal Church, so it was when I got to Havana that I started going to the Episcopal Church.

Q: You were confirmed, et cetera?

OSTRANDER: I was not confirmed then until—this was still a sore point. So finally I was confirmed in 1958. I had been attending the Episcopal Church since 1950 on, just always, every Sunday, so I really considered myself Episcopalian. Then when I did get confirmed, I went back to Indianapolis to do it, because I thought, "I've got to really make this break." By that time, I guess Mother had decided, "Well, as long as she's going to church."

Q: "If that's the worst thing she does," right? [Laughter]

OSTRANDER: Exactly.

Q: At what point did your mother die?

OSTRANDER: Mother died in 1967 when I was in Mexico. She had a heart attack and was dead in ten minutes, but I would not wish her back, because I think the last ten years of her life, she really worried that she would have a stroke and be a burden to me, a vegetable, because that's sort of the way her brothers and sisters all go. So I think she had a lot of good years left, and I'm sorry about that, but I wouldn't have changed—it really did worry her that she was going to, maybe because her mother was a burden to her, that she worried, although I never knew that for sure. I can only imagine, because she never said a word. Anyway, she had a massive heart attack and was gone in ten minutes.

Q: At the height of her powers, which is certainly a good way to go.

OSTRANDER: Yes, that's true. She had a houseful of my cousins visiting, a whole bunch of them, at the time.

Q: You enjoyed English, obviously, and you enjoyed foreign languages.

OSTRANDER: And the arts, music. I kind of had a little flair for painting and drawing, but not enough to devote any time to it, you know. Just enough to get me a full appreciation of what somebody who was really talented could do.

Q: Did you study much history?

OSTRANDER: Not until college, and in college I did. The other day when I was going through the attic again, I came across a paper I had written for one of those courses, a course in contemporary European history or something like that. I came across a term paper that I had done which was on the Foreign Service Act of 1946 and about the United States Foreign Service. I had forgotten that I had done that, so maybe somewhere in the back of my mind, but it certainly wasn't conscious, was this whole idea.

Q: That's interesting.

OSTRANDER: Certainly I was interested in learning Spanish, which was my major, and any other language that I could manage to get, German, French, and that really turned me on. Then as my last year in college approached, I knew I was going to go to Cuba as fast as I could. I knew my family wasn't going to let me do it, so the day I graduated from college, I went down to the War Assets Administration and got a job typing inventories. I think about that, because I typed inventories for at least twelve hours a day. Of course, today they would have it on a computer, which would automatically take care of itself. We had to type inventories of war surplus. I did it twelve hours a day and I did it for two weeks and a couple of days straight, and the third consecutive Sunday you got paid triple time.

So by that time I had enough money, $200, and I had talked some Cuban friends of mine, who were going back to Cuba for the summer, into letting me sit in their back seat. So then I went home with the money and announced I was leaving for Cuba, to see my uncle. I think Mother knew that I was not coming back, because she immediately got in touch with Cuban friends to try to look after me. I didn't think about anything beyond getting off the plane in Cuba. She realized that there was a little more to it than that. What would I do when I got there? But she got in the back seat with me and rode all the way to Miami, then saw me off on the plane, but arranged with friends to take care of me for a few days in Havana, until my uncle's business partners were up in Havana, and they could drive me back to where he lived and I would visit him during the summer and stay with my uncle's business partner. And all this for nothing, of course. Well, it was absolutely marvelous, but after three months my mother wrote me and said, “Sorry, but the money has run out. You've got to go to work and you can't just live off these people forever.” Because my uncle had had a very bad stroke in the meantime, so he couldn't look after me at all.

This was in the far eastern end of Cuba. So I went down to the consulate at Santiago de Cuba, and applied for a job. They had been hiring American clerks through the Foreign Service, but every one of them, as soon as she arrived, had taken one look at Santiago de Cuba, which was not the garden spot of the world, and quit. So I kind of came as a godsend right out of the blue and they hired me on the spot. So you see, I backed into it. I was avoiding going home. I was hired as an FSS-14, Foreign Service Staff 14, $2,160 a year, general clerk, and that was my entry into the Foreign Service.

Q: Imagine! That is quite a rise from there to ambassador.

OSTRANDER: I'll answer your questions and then leave it at that.

Q: Where did you learn your secretarial skills?

OSTRANDER: I didn't have any secretarial skills. My mother saw me studying art and history and foreign languages and said to herself, “This one had better learn to type,” and Eve, too, just to be on the safe side. So she insisted on a typing course, and I must say that's what they wanted me for. They wanted a typist. They didn't really care about somebody who was interested in the culture of the land. [Laughter]

Q: But that's the only secretarial experience you had had?

OSTRANDER: I avoided stenography like the plague because I knew that's what I would end up doing. But I was always good at filing. Lane Bryant's had taught me that! [Laughter]

Santiago de Cuba was a very small post. There was a consul and a staff officer and the American clerk. Then there were about six or seven local clerks, and that was it. The consul had been there for years. There was an awful lot to do at that post. It was a big area, a big district, so he often was traveling and the other one was often out of the office on business, so they sort of turned the whole thing over to me, and it was a marvelous job. They just let me learn everything! I learned passports, citizenship, estate law. They let me do the accounting for a year. Let me—they forced me to do the accounting for a year. The budgeting. They just gave me exposure to everything that there is to do in a consulate.

Q: Tremendous for the first job.

OSTRANDER: Of course, we had the naval base at Guantanamo and they were often in Santiago, so I got to do all that liaison work, and all of this in Spanish. Harry Story was the consul there. He'd been in Santiago for years and years and years. He thought the sun rose and set on me, and just said, “This is potential here, and I'll mold it.” Bless his heart, he really did a good job. So that was three and a half years, and I didn't realize it at the time, y of course, that I was learning anything, but I certainly was. Really, still to this day, there's not an office that I walk into in the Foreign Service that I don't understand exactly what's going on at every desk because I've done it.

Continuation of interview: May 21, 1986

OSTRANDER: I can remember during the war and I was, of course, very young, in my mid-teens, having in my room big maps of the world, in which I stuck pins, and followed all the battles. So that may have had an influence on my interest in overseas affairs. I have also often thought, though, that if the Peace Corps had existed in my day, I probably would have joined up so fast and so quickly. I can also remember even wanting to join the military service, but they didn't take sixteen-year-olds. [Laughter]

Q: Do you think this was partly because so many of your male cousins were—

OSTRANDER: I suppose. Well, it wasn't only male cousins, you know; it was every male that you knew. There were just not very many men around. It must have had an extraordinary effect on those who did not go to war, because you would really be the odd person out, I should think.

Q: People would accuse you of cowardice?

OSTRANDER: I don't know what. I suppose nobody accused anybody of anything really, but I'm sure that they would have imagined all kinds of slights because they would feel terribly guilty.

Q: World War II definitely affected your choice of career, subconsciously perhaps?

OSTRANDER: Not so much that. I wasn't really even conscious that I was selecting a career.

Q: That's true, of course, but you knew you wanted to travel.

OSTRANDER: Oh, yes, I knew I wanted to live overseas, as long as I was going to work for a living. As a matter of fact, I can remember thinking, “As long as you're just going

to type for a living, it might as well be in a very interesting area that you're doing this typing." [Laughter] And I think that was quite right.

Q: You didn't have high ambitions in those days?

OSTRANDER: No, I don't think women did. It doesn't surprise me at all, but again I have often said what surprises me is that we were not surprised by it and that it didn't occur to us that there was anything wrong with that. It's the way it was. Probably left over from many things, but at least during the Depression I can remember my teachers who were women would lose their jobs because they were not considered heads of households, although, of course, they were. We know that now, but we didn't know it then. If anybody had to lose a job, and most places did lose plenty of people, it was the women who went, because the basic idea, the basic judgment, was that they weren't supporting other people. But, of course, they were.

So when I did look for a job, it really never occurred to me that anybody owed me a job, so I was extraordinarily grateful when I got it. That wasn't so much because I was a woman as it was because of the general economic situation first and then women last. But we did come into things sort of sliding through from the side door, and we accepted that, and I don't know why. But I think we learned that getting what we wanted and needed was the important thing, and how that came about was not all that important.

Q: Yes. But also, society's goal for women was marriage.

OSTRANDER: Oh, by all means.

Q: And children. You weren't a woman unless you'd had a child. [Laughter]

OSTRANDER: Exactly.

Q: And it was just drummed into us.

OSTRANDER: Oh, it certainly was. That was what we were prepared for. And there's nothing wrong with that, except it shouldn't be all-inclusive, that there wasn't anything else. I do envy women these days who seem to be able to have everything, although I wonder. I do wonder. I think I'm a person who is very one-track-minded, and I don't think I could do both.

Q: I think we're finding that somebody gets left out.

OSTRANDER: I think so, because they're going twenty-four hours a day.

Q: The husband or someone gets left out.

OSTRANDER: Exactly.

Q: Nobody is Super Woman.

OSTRANDER: And somebody always will get left out unless there turns out to be some way that you can put the raising of the children someplace else, either in a daycare center or with auntie or with somebody else. But as long as you are supposed to bring up the children and do take that on, why, something's got to get slighted.

Q: Exactly. Do you think that the war made you a more serious person than you had been before?

OSTRANDER: I don't know. I've always been considered a very serious person. People always tell me, “You have a wonderful sense of humor,” but in the next breath they're talking about, “You're a very serious-minded person.”

Q: No, no, I quite understand. You can have a good sense of humor but still have serious goals and serious moral values.

OSTRANDER: I think probably the basic cause for that seriousness is probably some sort of insecurity, with no father and no brothers, and no money, I think I realized very early that what I was going to have would be what I made for myself or what you married, but then, of course, I guess that's the story for everybody. But I am thinking of a good friend of mine who is very happy-go-lucky, although she works for a living, and she's got eight brothers and sisters or more. I've forgotten; maybe she's got even more. I used to think about her. Why is it she is so free of any sort of worry about tomorrow? I think, by gosh, she's got a real support group there. Any of her brothers and sisters would take her in. I don't really have anybody who's going to take me in. It's going to be me taking others in.

Q: It must be very difficult to be an only child.

OSTRANDER: I never thought of it as difficult, and I still don't. I kind of like it that way, being self-sufficient, but I think I learned very early on that it would be a self-sufficient sort of goal that I would have to meet. Perhaps for that reason, the seriousness. Some people have called it ambition, being ambitious, and I don't think that's it at all. I've never really cared whether I've made the grade, just so I kept the job. I think for that reason, a sort of basic idea has always been, no matter what they give you to do, do it better than anybody has ever done it before, not particularly do it in such a way that they'll promote you, but just meet some sort of self-imposed criteria that this is better than anybody who's ever held that job before has done it. Even as a typist, I did that. Q: So this was perfectionism, really?

OSTRANDER: But perfectionism for myself. Is that perfectionism? I don't think I ever strove to be perfect, just better.

Q: You didn't want anybody to have reason to say that you were expendable, maybe?

OSTRANDER: I suspect that's it. Right. Or fail. I never wanted to fail at anything.

Q: Did the Depression have a very big effect on you? Although you said during the last interview that you never went hungry.

OSTRANDER: No, never went hungry and never really realized, never really had any sense of being deprived. I suppose I wasn't, really. I never had any sense of insecurity from that. Again, I think it's because everybody was in the same boat. If you're poor today or if you're living really in poverty today, I suspect you don't have that sense that it will come to an end and the sureness that you're going to pull out of it. In the 1930s, I don't think anybody felt that it wasn't going to come to an end, putting up with it until things got better. It was just finding a way to make things better. I never had any more or any less than my school friends, and I don't think we asked our parents for all the things that children do these days. Of course, we didn't have TV showing it to us. But there wouldn't have been any point in having TV showing it in those days, because there just wasn't the cash around for that. The Depression had an effect in that perhaps it made me more serious, because I guess we all did learn that money isn't something you can take for granted, that will always be there. Good times changed pretty well almost overnight; people began to worry about money: An awful lot of friends in school whose fathers had gone bankrupt and they had to lose their homes, but I think most kids at that age are pretty unconscious of this sort of thing. Children just seem to take that sort of thing for granted. And they're just not used to having a handle on anything. Good things happen and bad things happen.

Q: That's just the way the world is. Was your mother a very serious individual? Could you perhaps have absorbed some of her feelings without her being aware of it, if she was worried? She must have been at certain times.

OSTRANDER: I don't think she ever let us know that she ever worried at all. Of course, I've come to realize that she must have spent a lot of sleepless nights, but again, she had that support group of all her brothers and sisters, too. I'm sure that meant a great deal to her. We were all very close on that. I suspect that they all gave her advice, much of which

probably was not wanted and not welcome. [Laughter] Except for the fact that it did give her a feeling that they cared. I can't imagine that any of those brothers or sisters would have let Mother or any of us go hungry or without a roof over our head. We all helped each other. But again, I had no concept that any of this was going on at all. I knew it was hard times, but only because we couldn't listen to the radio without knowing it.

Q: Were you a newspaper reader?

OSTRANDER: I certainly was in college. I'm trying to remember earlier than that. Oh, yes, I think current events was always an interest.

Q: With your interest in the war, I'm sure you must have followed that.

OSTRANDER: Yes, of course, I would have to follow that.

Q: So that would have been in high school, wouldn't it?

OSTRANDER: That had to be in high school. The war started when I was a sophomore in high school, my second year of high school, a four-year high school. That was 1941. Maybe the third year. 1939 to '43 is when I went to high school.

Q: Certainly the storm clouds were brewing from '39 on, and I'm sure your modern history teachers made you very well aware.

OSTRANDER: Oh, yes, and we followed it very closely. I didn't really go back and study it until college days, of course, in just modern contemporary history. I did take quite a few history courses in college. You asked me last time whether I had any interest in that. I did not study ancient history, although, of course, I got a lot of it in my Latin.

American history was required. I took a good course called “Constitutional History of the United States,” which I often go back to. I still have that text. It was a history of the United States, but looked at from the point of view of studying what brought on the Bill

of Rights and then going through all the amendments and what brought those on, which is a kind of unique way of looking at it, I thought, and a good way. I remember a course called “European History Since Waterloo,” which was very difficult, and I used to call it my “Waterloo course” because I thought it was going to do me in. The professor of that class, Dr. Beeler, had a great influence on me, and I learned much later that he'd been in the Foreign Service and had resigned from foreign service to go into teaching. He could make it live, though, I must say, and I'm sorry about the Foreign Service missing his talents, but he was a great gift, I thought, to the teaching profession.

Q: Going back to your school days and especially college, did you hold any class offices? When you were in the sorority, were you an officer?

OSTRANDER: I was scholarship chairman. It shows again how very serious everybody thought I was, and I guess I was. Contemplative. Is that the word?

Q: Absolutely. Did you win any prizes in school?

OSTRANDER: Oh, I was in so many organizations, I'm trying to think, in high school and in college. I graduated Phi Kappa Phi. We didn't have Phi Beta Kappa at that university.

Q: Who's Who in American Colleges?

OSTRANDER: No, no, no, no. My grades were excellent, but they weren't—well, I was in the top ten percent, obviously, but they must have been about the top eight percent. I can remember the only Cs I got. I never got anything below a C, and the only Cs I got were in botany, which I think is kind of interesting. I hated botany. I love flowers and I'm a gardener, but I hated dissecting those beautiful things to find out what made them tick. My botany professor didn't like my drawings because I made them very artistic rather than very scientific. He said, “Why did you put this up here in this corner?” Because it had to balance! [Laughter]

Q: You were in the wrong class. You should have been in art class.

OSTRANDER: I was in the wrong class. I got a C in botany. I got a C in something called “Marriage and the Family,” and considering what my current job is, I think that's kind of interesting. I found that course very boring because it really didn't teach me anything that I didn't know. I don't know why I took it. I think it was an hour class that came at the right day of the week or something. I think those are the only two classes I got Cs in. So that's a pretty good average. I joined all the language classes, which all had clubs, and I was in those. I was in a contemporary English literature organization. I'm sorry I don't have all the old schoolbooks.

Q: So that was your social life, wasn't it? Because during the war there wasn't any dating; the men were gone.

OSTRANDER: The men were gone. Of course, we had no intercollegiate sports.

Q: Rather a drab time to be going to college.

OSTRANDER: We managed to have a lot of fun, but it was not the kind of fun that I suppose they have these days.

Q: You didn't have the usual dating and balls and fraternity dances.

OSTRANDER: The last couple of years, yes, when the boys were coming back from overseas. But then the boys were so serious. They couldn't get through college fast enough! A lot of them were up in years and married. Really, it was a serious time. Maybe that's what made me serious.

Q: It was a serious time at a very formative period in your life.

OSTRANDER: I doubt if many of us were very flippant. Let me put it that way. Certainly my sorority sisters were all achievers. You know, so many of them in my pledge class

in my sorority, an absolutely incredible percentage have died of cancer. It just makes me wonder, you know. I wish I could tell you the exact numbers of how many, but the percentage is so far up there.

Q: Of your sorority sisters?

OSTRANDER: Yes, of the ones that were actually pledged and initiated with me. I can just go through the list. It's just incredible. And even many who have not died have been afflicted. I'm just one of the few, maybe of a handful, five or six in the whole group that has escaped.

Q: Have you ever tried to figure out if there was anything they all had in common?

OSTRANDER: Makes one wonder, doesn't it? Makes you wonder.

Q: Did they all marry when they were nineteen?

OSTRANDER: We all smoked like crazy, of course, but so did I.

Q: You stopped?

OSTRANDER: I gave it up ten years ago, with emphysema coming on fast, and I had pneumonia at the time. I was told to give it up, and I thought, “Well, I'll give it up as long as I have to go back to the doctor,” and he kept me coming back for two years, so that took care of that. And I'm glad. But I was a heavy smoker; we all were. No, even the few who weren't heavy smokers, many of those [have had cancer]. It's scary when I think of it.

Q: One wonders why so many from that particular area.

OSTRANDER: And not only in my pledge group, but the ones who were there for the four years that I was there, the ones who were living in the house. It makes you kind of wonder

what was in the water or something. And all close friends. They started dying in their late thirties.

Q: No wonder you're serious. If you weren't before, you'd be now, wouldn't you? It's dreadful.

OSTRANDER: Yes, it is. Incidentally, my sorority was Kappa Kappa Gamma, and they selected me as Woman of the Year in 1978. There were four Women of the Year. I don't think they've selected any more Women of the Year. But one of the others, I noticed, was Jane Pauley. [Laughter] Of course, she is much younger than I am, and I hadn't even realized she was a Kappa.

Q: You mean nationally they selected?

OSTRANDER: Yes. There were four of us. I've forgotten who the other two were. I didn't get to the ceremonies; I was in Suriname. It was 1980. We were having a revolution at the time, and I couldn't quite leave.

Where did we leave us? In Cuba?

Q: We left you in Cuba, yes, and you were telling me how you got into the Foreign Service through the back way, and how Harry Story, as the consul, molded you. He helped you in all sorts of ways and made sure you did all the work, all different kinds of work, in the consulate. I was in Santiago until 1947. I went to work on September 29, 1947.

Q: You even remember the date!

OSTRANDER: Oh, yes, I certainly do. I stayed in Santiago until Christmas Eve 1950.

Q: Then you went over to Havana.

OSTRANDER: I went to Havana. Somebody from the embassy had come down from Havana early on, and they were trying to find someone at about my clerical level, which was very low, to run their consular section file room. Again, they were having the same trouble as Santiago was having, that whenever they found an American girl and brought her down there on transfer, she would take one look at the job or the work or the surroundings and say, “This is not for me,” and leave. Havana was having the same difficulty in that consular file room. It was pretty much of a mess and they just simply couldn't find anyone. So I can remember when they talked to me about it, I had a feeling, “Oh-oh, I wonder if somebody's about to do something.” And sure enough, they did. They just phoned one day and said, “Be on the plane.” Christmas Eve, they said, “Be on the plane.” I was very upset. I was running around with a very nice, young Spanish Cuban from Spain, and had big plans for Christmas Eve and for the holidays. I was really upset to have to leave, but I did as I was told. They promised they would send me back the next week to pack, but I had to leave without packing and everything.

Q: Why the big rush for Christmas Eve? Surely they closed?

OSTRANDER: Exactly! Exactly! But this was sort of typical of the Foreign Service in those days. You always had to be somewhere so fast, and when you got there, they would—and the same thing happened here. When I walked in, they said, “But we didn't expect you.” But that's the way it went.

So my first home then in Havana was in the Ambos Mundos Hotel, which I wonder if it's still there or not. It was certainly a relic, even then, in old Havana, downtown, and was the hotel that Ernest Hemingway used to live in and where he wrote his earliest work. Sun Also Rises, perhaps, or maybe even earlier than that. But I remember there was a plaque in the room, that that's where he had written it.

Q: In your room?

OSTRANDER: In my room. I lived there for a while until I learned of a boarding house, Ma Findlay's. She was British. There was a wonderful group in that boarding house.

Q: Were they consular people?

OSTRANDER: There was one from the French consulate. There were three from the American Embassy, one who has been a lifelong friend ever since then. But mainly British and American business people, teachers, who stayed there for a while until they got settled and then moved on. So it was a good beginning for anybody. My mother would have approved of Ma Findlay's boarding house, and did, as a matter of fact.

I stayed there for, I think, a little over a year, and then [I lived with] the one I spoke of, who was a lifelong friend, whose name was Rae Yelverton, who was from Akron, Ohio. As a matter of fact, the embassy called me in to find out who this Rae I was living with was. They wouldn't dare do that these days. I said, “Let me introduce you.” She worked for the Navy. So who was this person in the Navy named Rae that I was living with? We took an apartment together and we had a marvelous time. Those were wonderful days, both of us going steady all the time. She married her young man, who was Danish and with the Nestl# Company, who later went on to hold a very high office in Nestl#. They're now retired and are living in Toronto, so I still see Rae and hear from her often.

Work was not the most important thing in my life for those years in Havana or Santiago, either. They may think of me as serious, but I had a wonderful time in Cuba! We'd dance all night and still be able to go to work and do a very good job. If I danced all night at this age, I think I would have to take a couple of weeks' vacation to get over it. [Laughter] But not so in those days. It was marvelous. The Cuba years were heaven. I, of course, became completely bilingual in Spanish.

Q: The young man you were dating was Spanish?

OSTRANDER: Cuban, of course. I never really had much interest in American young men. [Laughter] Anyway, our friendship kept on for years. We did not marry, and all for the best. I don't know why I say that, except that I cannot believe that as a marriage it ever would have lasted very long. We enjoyed each other's company very much, but not to that extent.

Q: Well, maybe you were having just too good a time to tie yourself down.

OSTRANDER: I suppose so. Oftentimes he wanted to get married and oftentimes I wanted to get married, and I used to think if we ever wanted it at the same time, it might work out, but we never did. And maybe that was it. Whenever he was interested, I'd back off. Perhaps neither one of us wanted that sort of responsibility.

Q: What happened to the poor fellow you left behind in Santiago?

OSTRANDER: He came up to see me a couple of times in Havana, and it was just obvious, even on the first visit, that I had moved on. Not out of sight, out of mind, but proximity certainly is important. It didn't last very long.

The other night on PBS, there was a program about a young Cuban man returning to Santiago de Cuba. He had lived here for ten years. His family had come up from Santiago and he had lived here and become a newspaper reporter. He had left when he was eight or nine years of age, something like that, and he had gone back with TV cameras. Of course, I looked at it with interest, you can imagine, to see Santiago again. But in listening to him explaining about his family, I realized he was the nephew of this young man that I had gone with when I was in Santiago.

Q: Did you enjoy Havana as much as, or more than, Santiago?

OSTRANDER: In a different way. In a different way entirely. I loved them both.[Laughter]

Q: You had more responsibility, of course.

OSTRANDER: Oh, I certainly did. It was a big section that I ran there. They liked the way I ran it, and I can remember my boss there, Ben Zweig, long dead, I think, but a Foreign Service name, for sure.

Q: This was the file room?

OSTRANDER: It was the consular file room. That was a big job at that time. We had a lot of work to do.

Q: It was a very big embassy, wasn't it?

OSTRANDER: Yes, it was. It was a sizable embassy. Willard Beaulac was there. I was there for a little over three years, so we had a couple of ambassadors. I made many good friends in that embassy, and some of the local employees who left at that time are here, and I have known them since.

Q: By this time you had about decided to stay in the Service?

OSTRANDER: If things had worked out with this man, I would have stayed. No, I wasn't thinking career at all. Just enjoying every day and having a marvelous time.

Q: How was the pay back then?

OSTRANDER: I started at $2,160 a year, and I can remember after two years, a telegram came around from the Department of State, a circular telegram, saying that they were now employing, as an opening salary, one grade higher, and if there was anybody around who was still at that old level, they were automatically promoted. And I was one of those, so that brought me up to FSS-13. Then I got another promotion to FSS-12 when I was in Havana, and then a double promotion after that, because the work was obviously much more important than what I was being paid. I wasn't suffering for lack of money at all, but I certainly wasn't spending it like a drunken sailor, either.

Q: But it was ample to live on, and it was an inexpensive place to live, wasn't it?

OSTRANDER: Havana was considered very expensive at the time. As a matter of fact, we used to be able to go to Miami and live in a hotel for the weekend and still come out ahead, and we did that. I think what we paid was about thirty-five dollars round-trip on the plane. We'd go on shopping sprees because it was so much cheaper to buy things in Miami.

Anyway, the day came that I got orders again for direct transfer to Vienna with the Refugee Relief Program. Again, a wrench. I don't know why I was always picked for direct transfers, but I had never had a home leave. In those days, if you put one foot in the United States, they called it “breaking continuity,” and you could only have home leave at government expense if you were outside the U.S. for two years. Well, taking these trips back and forth to Miami, of course, broke all the continuity, and I also always went home and spent two or three weeks on vacation every year. So I never had a home leave, so I suppose that's the reason for always having direct transfers. I was never eligible for home leave.

Of course, going to Vienna, having lived all that time in the tropics, I immediately took some annual leave and went up and bought a lot of winter clothes. I can remember they gave me seventy-five dollars to buy myself a new winter wardrobe. Well, you can imagine, even in those days, that did not even buy a winter coat. Or if it did, it didn't buy a very good one.

Q: This was what year?

OSTRANDER: 1954. As soon as I got back, having bought all these winter clothes, there was a telegram waiting, saying that the orders were cancelled, and I was to continue in Havana. Well, I was on the phone to everybody I could think of, thinking, “My gosh, what will I do? Are they going to transfer me somewhere else?” My lease was about to expire.

Should I re-sign the lease? This sort of thing. Within a month, the orders came. They apparently had just filled that other job and what I had was orders to go to The Hague, not in consular work, but to be the records and communications supervisor.

Q: Was that similar work?

OSTRANDER: Of course not. I knew how to file visa records, but I certainly didn't know anything about keeping embassy records or running a code room! Anyway, I demanded that they take me through Washington to try to find out what all this was about.

I have to go back here on the impact of the [Senator Joseph] McCarthy investigations. I was in Havana, of course, when the McCarthy investigations were going on, and it was absolutely devastating. It was unbelievable. As I recall, Havana (and maybe all the other places) was given a quota of the number of people they would have to lose, the number of communists that would have to be found, the number of disloyal people. The embassy did this in stages, and the people who were to be fired were told on Fridays, Friday afternoon, usually. I can remember work came to a halt every Friday afternoon for months, and we all sat there and stared at our telephones to see who it would be.

Q: These are people who had been accused of being communist sympathizers or fellow travelers?

OSTRANDER: I have no idea, but everybody was under investigation. The things that were called “questionable” were unbelievable. I can remember one of the gals I worked with, she was first generation U.S., her family was French and I've forgotten what else, but although she was U.S.-born, her family had gone to Cuba and she was living as a U.S. citizen in Cuba, and she was fired.

Q: Because she was a “foreigner?”

OSTRANDER: I guess so. I mean, you had to find some reason to fire people for disloyalty.

Q: McCarthy had set up quotas, had he?

OSTRANDER: My understanding was, one in four was a communist. You heard a lot of rumors about what was going on, of course, in Washington, that the State Department offices were called every week to say, “You haven't fired your quota of communists.” It certainly wasn't taken across the board. The accusation was one in four in every office was a communist. I don't remember that anybody was fired in my area because of being a communist, but certainly they were accused of being disloyal for something in their background. A lot of people lost jobs. A lot of them lost jobs because of allegations of homosexuality, and I have no doubt that there must have been some in that embassy. Some of them I certainly would have questioned myself. I never would have questioned their loyalty. I certainly might have questioned their sexual preference.

Q: Who pointed the finger at all these people?

OSTRANDER: I have no idea and didn't want to find out. That was far away in the administrative section where all that was going on. I did spend a lot of time looking at the phone, worrying.

This one gal that I spoke of, who was fired, whose family was originally from France, told me that those were the reasons that she was given. Her job was to write up and ask for advisory opinions under the Immigration Act of that time, which, of course, kept—and still does— keeps out people who are considered security risks. I used to wonder if they used that, and what she asked for and what her own opinion was, because you always had to give your own opinion.

Q: She was writing about the Immigration Act?

OSTRANDER: Yes, but she didn't say that. She said she wondered if her particular job might have had something to do with it, that maybe they didn't like some of the opinions that she expressed. Because you always had to say whether or not you thought somebody was subversive, and give the reasons why, then ask for an advisory opinion on what the Department thought. But no, she was convinced that it was her family background. Whether she was telling me the whole story or not, I don't know, but I sure felt she was a good and loyal employee, as were the ones that I saw go. A lot of people left that I'm not sure whether it had to do with this or not, but all I know is Friday afternoons were absolutely devastating, and it was ugly. That's the only word. It was just really terrible. Just really bad.

Q: It was a reign of terror. Did any of the people ever come back into the Service that were fired at that time, that you know of?

OSTRANDER: None that I know of. An awful lot of guilt feelings going around. I know an awful lot of people saying, “It could be, I suppose, that because I did so and so,” and a lot of those people never lost their jobs. But it was a real insecure time, that's for sure. You felt that there was no defense. If they accused, you'd go, because there wasn't any way you were going to beat it. They would just disappear, you know. Today they had a job, tomorrow they didn't.

Q: Of course, at that same time the RIF [reduction in force] was going on.

OSTRANDER: True. Absolutely. So maybe they did mesh.

Q: What impact did that have on you? Did you become more conservative about what you did in the office? You must have. Everybody did. Margaret Tibbetts has told me that she thinks the Department never got over what was done to it by McCarthy, and that it made people timid, and that's why they have the reputation for “cookie pushing” and all that sort of thing. Do you feel it had that much of an impact on the Foreign Service?

OSTRANDER: It's got to have had an impact. When I got to The Hague, I heard stories there about the local employees being followed. I didn't exactly observe this, because I got to The Hague in 1954 and a lot of this was getting over. A lot of people were questioning and wondering about everybody else. Maybe we did feel guilty about what we might have said. We certainly didn't talk about each other, I don't think. And you certainly, I think, were not as open with local and with foreign people as you ever had been. Maybe we've never quite gotten over that, or at least those of us who lived through that era may have learned a lesson a bitter and hard way, that what you say, for perhaps a purpose that is to the ultimate good or the best interest of the United States, may come back at you, so you better watch it. You may have to explain it, and maybe the explanation of it, “Look, I was trying to get at such and such,” may not be enough. I think we did learn a very hard lesson.

Q: It sort of changed the style, didn't it?

OSTRANDER: It certainly did. To this day people get surprised when they see things going in a way that maybe looks like it's getting a little out of hand. I think those of us who lived through the McCarthy age are not surprised at that. It can happen here. I would hope that we have learned enough from the McCarthy age so that that sort of thing would never happen again, but it wouldn't surprise me. People's memories are very short. Of course, those of us who lived through it are those with the memories, and I don't think we'd ever do it. But enough time has gone by that—

Q: But the fact that you wouldn't do it might have other people call you fuddy-duddies, if you see what I mean.

OSTRANDER: Or worry-warts. Yes. “This is the United States. That doesn't happen.” Or, “That happened in the old days.” Well, we were saying the same thing back then. “These things don't happen in the United States.” They certainly can get out of hand.

Q: It was just about over when you got to The Hague?

OSTRANDER: Right. I didn't ever really like living in The Hague, although I think The Hague is the most beautiful city I have ever lived in. It was an interesting period of time, not all that long after the war. Housing was very scarce and difficult to come by, and so many rules and regulations about where you could live and where you couldn't live, and having to go through something called a Huisvesting

Huisvesting was housing control. The Dutch had all kinds of rules and regulations. If they were married and their ages totaled sixty, they could have a bathroom, this sort of thing; otherwise they shared. Housing was really that bad, because of the bombing. The Dutch, as usual, were keeping very tight control: “This year we build businesses, and next year we build apartments.” If you were moving from one district of the city to another, you had to have their permission to move. If you paid over a certain amount for rent, you could get pretty good housing. You didn't have to go through the huisvesting, because the Dutch could not afford it, so therefore it wasn't really [necessary]. We all had roommates for that reason, because we could pool our allowances and get around the business.

Q: How did you choose your roommate, or was it chosen for you?

OSTRANDER: She had arrived just about the same time I had and was looking for a place to live. She was looking at the same time I was, which is what was important.

But the job was a humdinger. There hadn't been anybody in it for six months, and no document had been filed for six months. I didn't know anything about code rooms. They had lost so many people because it was really a chaotic situation. The European Community was trying to get going at that time, and France kept voting everything down. The cables flew like nobody's business, so it was really twenty-four-hours-a-day work with very few people. People would quit from burnout, and then, of course, I walked in and I didn't know a code room from a kitchen stove. I lost two code clerks when I arrived, because they said, “We can't go through this anymore!”

Q: Were you responsible for all cables getting out?

OSTRANDER: In and out. But what I tried to do, knowing that what they really didn't need was a code clerk; what they needed was a good manager, was to set about trying to bring order out of the chaos. And I did that. That's what I had done in Havana, too, and I think I set up a reputation at that point of, “If you've really got a mess, Nancy can untangle it.”

Q: “Send in Ostrander.”

OSTRANDER: Exactly. As a matter of fact, I didn't mind that at all. I liked being able to point at progress. I have never known a more grateful ambassador than “Doc” Matthews, who was our number-one ambassador at the time, H. Freeman “Doc.” He was always known as “Doc.” He's still alive, I think. He's 100 or something. There was one grateful ambassador, because when he needed documents, he needed them now and he needed them right now, and suddenly he was able to find them and get them. I did set up a good system, and I got a good team together, and we really got it moving. We did a fine job.

Q: How many people did you have under you?

OSTRANDER: [Laughter] Very few when I first started. I had three employees: Earl, Pearl, and Berle. I remember that. And a few others. Let's see. Probably three code clerks and a pouch clerk and maybe three file clerks, but we had a lot more positions than that. I think at full staffing it was double that, if not even larger.

Q: This doubled while you were there?

OSTRANDER: Yes.

Q: That's a very big section.

OSTRANDER: It was. The Hague was a big post, and we had a lot of military. We were the central communications center for that. That is, all of the mail came in to us and went

out through us, and we had to get it to the right military groups, which then distributed it. We were pretty central.

Q: But you didn't really enjoy it, you say?

OSTRANDER: Oh, it was twenty-four-hours-a-day work. We had the telexes going to Djakarta through the middle of our section, going out to Indonesia, because that break hadn't been really—the Dutch were no longer in Indonesia, but the old system hadn't really been gotten away from. It was just an impossible job, and the Dutch were not open to us. It was hard to make friends among the Dutch, because we were very low level. They were snobs about the whole thing. Let's face it. I can imagine the ones at the foreign office weren't going to make points because they knew some lowly file clerk. But because of that, we were pretty well isolated and we made such good friends among ourselves that, here it is, thirty-five years later, the group from The Hague are all still very close and write and talk to each other. I probably made more longer term friends in that group than in any other place I've ever been.

Q: Hardship brings people together, doesn't it?

OSTRANDER: I suppose so, and we did get so we enjoyed each other's company a lot, and we traveled a lot when we could get away, together, and got to see Europe.

Q: This experience that you people had was not common to, say, the political officers or the economic officers?

OSTRANDER: Oh, no, I don't think so. I was still only about an FSS-9 by this time.

Q: And your being Dutch-American didn't help?

OSTRANDER: It might have made it worse. I don't think anybody would have ever even taken the trouble to find out. Of course, among the locals in the embassy, no trouble at all, but outside it was awfully difficult.

Q: They're a very dour people, aren't they?

OSTRANDER: They are what I'd always been taught the British were, as far as being reserved. And the British, I don't think are, but the Dutch certainly were.

Q: They'd taken a pasting, too, hadn't they, during the war? All of Europe had. The French were very dour at this time, too.

OSTRANDER: I was there until 1957, so '54 to '57.

Q: I see that in 1956 you were commissioned a vice consul, diplomatic service. Is this the Wriston program?

OSTRANDER: This is the Wriston program. I had read about it, but they said you had to pass a language exam, and I hadn't spoken Spanish for a good long time, but I thought, “Well, let me see what I can do,” and I did extraordinarily well on the Spanish, even though I hadn't spoken it for a while. Then I did get home leave, finally, and when I was at home, I came to Washington and they asked me to come in to take the Wriston test, the oral exam.

Q: Only the oral?

OSTRANDER: That's what the Wriston program was. Instead of the written exam, if you could pass the language exam, they substituted an oral exam, giving you equivalency for the written test for however much time it was that was required. You had to be earning a certain salary at that point, and an equivalent salary, also, to the old FSO-6 or whatever it was. I did not have that much, so when I came back to Washington, although they told me to take this exam, I said, “I'll do whatever you want, but I am not qualified, because of the

salary.” They pooh-poohed that. Anyway, they said, “We don't know anything about that. You're scheduled for the test. Go take the test.”

Well, this Cuban boyfriend had showed up again, and I had been out dancing all night.

Q: This is the one from Havana?

OSTRANDER: Yes. I had been out dancing all night, because it just didn't make any difference to me whatsoever, because I knew I wasn't qualified. I didn't meet the basic qualifications!

So I went over to take the test, and I do remember, however, that I wore my hat and gloves, because it would have been insulting at that time not to at least look like you were trying. I really hadn't had any sleep. So I went in and I took this exam.

I remember that there was a sort of L-shaped table, and I was seated somewhere in the middle of one side of this, and they were long Ls. The chair was placed in such a way that I couldn't put my elbows on the table or get comfortable. I later learned that this was probably on purpose. There was a person at each end of the L, and one in the middle, but they were placed in such a way that I had to turn to them when each one of them addressed me. They really were trying to put you off-balance; there's no doubt about it. They were trying to upset me. They were trying to ask questions that would make me lose my temper. I was too unconscious to lose my temper, not having had any sleep, and assuming that I wasn't eligible for this, anyway.

I remember that they asked me to tell the history of the state of Indiana, what it was famous for, why it was important. They asked me to talk a little bit about myself, and in giving my autobiography, to include therein some reasons why I should be made a Foreign Service officer, why the United States would ever want me as one. I have no idea what I responded. They did ask quite a few questions, and these are the ones I remember after all those years. I know there were plenty more.

Q: Anything about, “Are you planning to marry and leave the Service?” Or “Are you engaged?” That sort of thing?

OSTRANDER: No, I don't recall that there was. It wouldn't surprise me if it was in there. You're reminding me that when I was in Havana, we had an inspection. I won't give you the names of the people who did the inspection, but I do remember that at that time the inspectors had to write an efficiency report on every person, and I did not get an efficiency report. The reason given—and written out—by that chief inspector was, “She will undoubtedly be married within the year and leave the Service, so we will not bother to write an efficiency report.”

And they did ask me in this examination why the inspector in Havana had taken a dislike to me, and I couldn't answer that. I said I had no idea he had taken a dislike to me. I know he had not written an efficiency report because he did not believe I would be staying in the Foreign Service, but for all I knew, he was right, you know. I didn't have any idea what I was going to do. It didn't really mean all that much to me. But anyway, that comes to mind because of this. That's about all I remember about that examination. I finished it, went back to the Netherlands to take up the second half of my tour there.

Q: How long was the exam? A whole morning?

OSTRANDER: It was a whole morning. I remember that when I had come to Washington, I had demanded that they put me through code training, because I said, “You cannot expect me to be over there running that code room without knowing what I'm doing.” So Elsie Crimm—do you remember Elsie Crimm?

Q: Indeed I remember the name.

OSTRANDER: Elsie Crimm came to me that morning. She was teaching me about codes, and she said, “I'm going to give you the morning off because of this exam, because you'll want to have your hair done, or something.” I must say I did go home and wash my hair

and set my hair, and I blessed her for that, because it did give me a feeling of confidence. So I guess the exam was in the afternoon. It probably took the entire afternoon. She had sort of given me the day off. I thought that was very considerate of her.

Anyway, I went back to the Netherlands and went back to work as usual, forgot all about this, except that suddenly here came a cable—and I still have the cable—saying that I was now an FSO-6, also I was promoted from FSS-9 to FSS-8 with this cable, and then taken in as an officer. So they knew that I was on the promotion list when I was back in Washington, and, of course, I didn't know that.

Q: And FSS-8 made it?

OSTRANDER: Made it. Made the equivalent. So I was eligible and I didn't know it.

Q: So you then became an FSO-6.

OSTRANDER: I was to remain where I was until they found a job for me, and it was the following year. I, of course, was dreaming of tropical climes. It was wonderful. Nobody asked where I wanted to go, and I kind of liked that because it just sort of leaves you thinking it could be anywhere. When the cable finally arrived, it was a direct transfer to Antwerp, Belgium, which was eighty miles down the road.

Q: Same climate. [Laughter]

OSTRANDER: The one thing that I had liked about The Hague was that when I came on the train up from Paris, from arriving on the boat, I would go through Antwerp and I would look out the window and say to myself, “This looks like Pittsburgh and at least I don't have to live here.”

Q: “Thank God I'm not there.” [Laughter]

OSTRANDER: Exactly. I remember that “Doc” Matthews had left The Hague and we had a new ambassador, whose name was Philip Young. He was head of the Civil Service Commission, a political appointee. Ambassador Young came to my goodbye party, and nobody had told him where I was going. He was a new arrival, and he gave the longest, saddest speech about how sad it was to lose friends that you had just met, and we would probably never run into each other again in this big, wide world, and people tried to nudge him, to get him to stop, but he didn't. Finally, he said, “Where is it you're going?” I told him, and he said, “Then you're going to come back for lunch?”

I said, “Yes, and I intend to do so often.” [Laughter]

So I moved down to Antwerp, where I was to be administrative officer.

Q: So you were admin. Before we get there, could you just fill me in on what was the time frame for this language examination and so forth? Do you recall when you took that? You took that examination back when you were in The Hague.

OSTRANDER: Yes, and it would have been just at the time they were announcing the Wriston program.

Q: 1955 or so, maybe? It finished in '56, that I remember.

OSTRANDER: Maybe the end of '55 or sometime during '55. Then, of course, they would have had the results of that. Then the promotion list would probably have been drawn up, but not announced yet, about the middle of '56. Then I went on home leave, so they got me when I came on home leave. So it looks very much like they knew what they were doing in those days.

Q: Sure did. When you went on home leave, do you recall when that was? When you had your first home leave? Was that in the spring of '56 or the summer of '56?

OSTRANDER: Yes, because I went on direct transfer and sailed in July of '54, and was expecting leave the next year, but they lost things. I complained, so they sent me on home leave in April of '56. So it must have been in about July of '56. When did the Andrea Dorea go down? I was at sea when the Andrea Dorea went down.

Q: On your way back?

OSTRANDER: Yes. It was pretty awful to think of.

Q: That was July 1956, because I was coming back from Japan and we heard about that while we were at sea.

OSTRANDER: I was on the Atlantic and you were on the Pacific. I remember that when we arrived in Le Havre. Wasn't it the France that picked up the survivors? I saw the France and realized then that she was on her way to pick up the survivors. We crossed at sea. Ships that pass in the night.

Q: Now we've got you in Antwerp and you are an admin officer.

OSTRANDER: An admin officer, which I knew nothing about, either! [Laughter] It was kind of a nice transfer, because as soon as I knew I was going to Antwerp, I got in the car and drove down there and started looking for a place to live, and found one. I was able to go back and forth. It was new apartment and nobody was in it, so I was able to measure for the curtains. The only time I was ever able, really, to arrive at a place knowing what to do about the furniture and whether the rugs would fit and all that sort of thing.

Q: You were dragging your own things around, of course.

OSTRANDER: Oh, yes.

Q: Did you have enough allowance, or was that ever a problem for you? Single people, I understand, sometimes do have a problem.

OSTRANDER: I used to watch it on books a lot, because at that time, for a single person, if you had too many books, you weren't going to have a bed to sleep in. [Laughter] So I always kept the book population down. Otherwise, I had rented a furnished apartment in Havana; I got to The Hague without really having any furniture, and I got a furnished place there. So Belgium was going to be the first unfurnished place that I had, and I was kind of picking up everybody's castoffs. Then I did buy some Danish furniture in the Netherlands on one of those deals where you didn't have to pay the import duty.

Q: From the catalog?

OSTRANDER: Yes. I still have it! Good stuff, teak things. They're light and they can come apart, too, for shipping. They look pretty good no matter where you go. They're plain enough so that if you use the dining room table in the breakfast room it's fine.

Q: You mentioned that you drove down to Antwerp. You had an automobile?

OSTRANDER: I bought my first car, a 1954 Hillman, hardtop convertible, $1,100.

Q: Was that the Minx?

OSTRANDER: The Minx. I had to borrow all the money for it. The Dutch do not approve of borrowing for anything, and to have a woman borrowing was just almost all they could put up with. I had to get all these letters from the embassy proving that I did have a job, and they worked out a two-year method for me to pay for it, and I had to go into American Express every month and give [the payment to] a man I called “Piggy,” because he just hated me for getting this loan. I finally paid that loan off in something like thirteen months; I couldn't stand going in to “Piggy.” But I hated owing money. I have never borrowed for a car since. I have always had the money before I bought it. I didn't even buy a pair of

stockings in those months without thinking, “Oh, I should be putting this on the car. I'll never do that again as long as I live.”

Q: I'm surprised a Dutch bank would give it to you.

OSTRANDER: Well, apparently I was the exception. I wonder how many underwriters I had at the American Embassy. Probably the whole U.S. Government's aid. [Laughter] Because they sure didn't want to do it.

Q: Do you think it was because you were a woman? Plus they don't believe in borrowing.

OSTRANDER: They just don't believe in borrowing to buy something like that. You would save your money in a sock somewhere, I guess. This was 1954, of course. Just buying things on credit was not a Dutch thing to do. I suspect it still isn't.

Q: Did you enjoy Antwerp?

OSTRANDER: I loved Antwerp! I spent four years there, after dragging my feet, thinking I was going to this dull place, and I just had a wonderful time. It was a marvelous group of people. What can I tell you? Well, I spent two years being an admin officer, and I think the bottom line of that is I was never cut out to be an admin officer.

Q: What did you do?

OSTRANDER: Everything. This is anything that's in an admin section, from general services, to budget and fiscal, to security, to anything you'd think of in the way of administration. I had a big section of about thirteen locals, if you include the servants of the consul general. So it was a big section.

Q: Were you called a GSO?

OSTRANDER: I was called the administrative officer. That's it.

Q: You were “it?”

OSTRANDER: There wasn't anybody else.

Q: What a wonderful opportunity!

OSTRANDER: Yes, it was, except you never please more than 90 percent of the people at best, and I got tired of this after a while. No matter what you did, somebody was—

Q: Carping.

OSTRANDER: The salary and expenses, all the personnel work, the local program. Whew! It was a plateful. Of course, Antwerp was the port at that time for Western Europe. I think it's probably switched on up to Rotterdam later.

Q: More than Le Havre was?

OSTRANDER: Oh, yes. It was the port. All household effects for all Western Europe came through there. We had a very busy office. Also, this was 1957, now; 1958 was the Brussels Fair, so, of course, we had all of the things coming for the fair. So we really had a big job to do.

Q: Did you have to handle the automobiles?

OSTRANDER: All the automobiles.

Q: Ambassadors' and all?

OSTRANDER: Exactly. All of that.

Q: That's an awful big job.

OSTRANDER: It was. And for your first job. It did teach me that I never wanted to go near administrative work again. [Laughter] A consul general, whose wife wanted to redecorate the entire house and kept changing her mind about it; I really got the administrative tasks. What would you call it? Being thrown into the fire. That's all there was to it. But it was very interesting. I wouldn't change it for anything. However, after two years they were trying to find a consular officer. Antwerp did all of the immigrant work for Luxembourg and all of Belgium. There were no immigrant offices in Brussels. Brussels did diplomatic visas and tourist visas. Of course, Luxembourg did its own. The rest of it was Antwerp. It was a good consular job and you had a terrific staff. When they couldn't find a consular officer, I let Washington know that if they could find another administrative officer, to go ahead and do that, and I would be happy to move. And that's just what happened. Don Tice was sent. Don came as junior officer, administrative officer; his first post. We had a grand group in the consulate itself, which was very small. There were thirteen locals in the administrative section, but I think all-told, there were thirteen Americans there, too, and a lot of single people and young-married. We would all just sort of get together and go out to dinner about three or four times a week. Had a wonderful time. Just the other night we had an Antwerp Night here, and a bunch of us got together and went out to dinner.

Q: What's coming through here very clearly is how much you enjoyed your life and the people you met.

OSTRANDER: Is it? Because it really is quite true. Antwerp stands out to me not only for the work there, which I did like, and the people, but also because of Brussels' World Fair of 1958. What a marvelous thing! Besides getting all of this stuff in and out and setting up the fair and working very closely with it, we were each given a pass to the fair and a ticket for each theatrical function. We never missed a one, so we saw the best of Broadway every night. It was just a dream! Immediately after work, we would get in our cars (it was about a half hour away) and drive to the fairgrounds, park in the diplomatic section, have dinner at the Czechoslovakian Pavilion or the Japanese, whatever we felt like eating. I remember

we always went to the Czech place for beer because they had good pilsner beer. I'm not a beer drinker, but that was out of this world. Then we would go for after-dinner coffee to the Turkish Pavilion. We just had a ball. Then, of course, to the plays. I remember Carousel. It was a summerlong of just all the best that Broadway could put on, and it was marvelous. My season ticket, next to me was Peter Townsend, if you remember.

Q: Indeed, very well.

OSTRANDER: It was all I could do to look at the stage.

Q: A handsome man.

OSTRANDER: Oh, my! He, of course, was assigned to the [British] Embassy in Brussels to get him out of England [Princess Margaret wished to marry Townsend, but being divorced, even though he was the innocent party, he was considered ineligible as Margaret's husband by the British government]. That's one of the things I remember.

Q: He had the seat next to yours?

OSTRANDER: Yes. He did marry a girl from Antwerp, so she must have been often there. He married her while I was in Antwerp. I can remember she was very Catholic, and the Antwerpians, with their eyebrows up here, were saying she was from a very wealthy family in Antwerp and the family doesn't care whether he's Catholic or not, doesn't care about the divorce. But she did marry him. She had been traveling with him for quite some time as his photographer. So that was after the fair, certainly. I didn't leave Belgium until 1961. It was while I was there.

One of the exciting things I remember was that Johnny Weismuller brought a rodeo and set it up, not as part of the fair, but at the same time as the fair. It was, of course, outdoors. I don't think he cased the joint too well, because you just don't do things out of doors in Northern Europe.

Q: It rains all the time!

OSTRANDER: Sure! That was a particularly rainy spell, and he was going bankrupt. Finally, things got so bad that one night he disappeared with the cash.

Q: Johnny Weismuller?

OSTRANDER: I can still remember. He may have given it back later; I don't know. But that was what was in the newspaper, that Johnny had gone and so had the cash. I can remember my general services clerk coming in with this look on his face. I mean, his world had collapsed, that Johnny Weismuller would have [done this]. He said, “I knew from your movies that people did make off with the cash from rodeos, but Johnny Weismuller?”

Q: I didn't even realize he did cowboy-type things.

OSTRANDER: In order to make up for their debts, we had to sell all the bucking broncos. Incidentally, getting those bucking broncos and the wild cattle off that ship was something that you can't imagine. We were trying to help. But anyway, there we were, stuck with them! Q: Who did the selling?

OSTRANDER: That was done up in Brussels, but we had something to do with it, and I can't remember why we had something to do with it. The fair was right at the edge of the consular district, and it's possible that the rodeo was in our district, but we were involved in it somehow or other, and we worked with the embassy and did sell the tents and all that sort of thing and recouped a lot of the money.

Also—and this is something that Brussels was much more involved in than I, but I did get involved in it because of the consular work—the cowboys and the Indians were left stranded. Basil McGowan was the chief consular officer in Brussels. The Indians were really, at that time, the responsibility of the Department of the Interior, so Basil did manage to get planes flown over from the Department of Interior to get the Indians out.

The cowboys were sitting in the middle of the lobby of the embassy, lassoing girls as they came through. I mean, this was real grass-roots stuff. That may have been how I got involved in it. I think we had to ask for donations to get the money to send the cowboys back. Of course, there were American clubs and this sort of thing, and I think everybody sort of pitched in, but we all breathed a sign of relief when the last lasso left the lobby of the embassy! [Hearty laughter]

Continuation of interview: May 28, 1986

Q: We were discussing the various things that had happened at the consulate at Antwerp. I believe you said that about that time you got a promotion.

OSTRANDER: I got a promotion to FSO-5 in March 1960. I had the Asian flu. I remember that Tony Freeman, Fulton Freeman, who was charg# at the time in Brussels, telephoned me with the good news. Knowing Tony Freeman, he probably telephoned everybody in Belgium who was on that list, giving the personal touch to it. I remember I was running a temperature of about 105. It was one of those twenty-four-hour flues, and my temperature went soaring. The next day it went to rock bottom, and then I was left feeling like I'd been run over by a truck. But I remember waking up the next morning, and along the side of my bed was I don't know how many empty bottles of Coca-Cola, and milk bottles. . .I must have been so thirsty, I must have drunk everything in the house. I was thinking I really was delirious, because I dreamed that Tony Freeman had called me up and told me that I'd been promoted. Of course, that part of it, at least, turned out to be true.

[Break in tape]

One of the things I didn't put on the tape and I wanted to make sure I got in, was how much I liked Antwerp because of a group of vice consuls that we had there. We had an organization there that, as far as I'm concerned, was unique; at least it has been in my experience. It was called the Vice Consuls Association, and you could not be above the rank of vice consul. You really had to be a junior officer to be in it. Antwerp was a huge

port at the time. (Later, Rotterdam took over most of its business.) But there must have been maybe close to fifty consulates in the city because of that, maybe even more, with consuls and offices. Q: So this was an international organization?

OSTRANDER: Absolutely international. There were only one or two of us [vice consuls] in the American consulate. We met every month, and it was really a marvelous, supportive group. I would commend it to any city. The purpose of the organization was to have fun. That was its only purpose. Nobody above the rank of vice consul could attend unless they were invited by a vice consul. That included consuls general, ambassadors, anything. We gave out those invitations rarely, and they were very much coveted. Each month, one of the vice consuls sponsored a traditional dinner from his country, and then we all got together. I can remember the Swedish smorgasbords and the Turkish dinners that lasted for hours. We really had a wonderful time.

But the beauty of this was that whatever consular problem a vice consul from any of these countries was faced with, you had a support group. I don't know how many American citizens, kids, who went broke in Antwerp, got work-a-ways with Swedish, Norwegian, and Danish vessels, because all I had to do was pick up the phone and say, “Have you got a work-a-way?” Of course they did, and these kids got home without any expense to the U.S. Government. I can't remember whether the other vice consuls had so many favors to ask as I did, but I certainly was grateful to this group. It really worked very well indeed. We all knew each other very well.

Q: That's the way diplomacy should work.

OSTRANDER: Exactly! Exactly!

Q: But it's interesting it took the young ones to lead the way.

OSTRANDER: The young ones were the ones with the real nitty-gritty consular problems.

Q: But also with the ideals, don't you think?

OSTRANDER: I suppose so. Anyway, it was marvelous.

Q: Before that, you said you felt you were "coming home" when you did consular work.

OSTRANDER: Oh, yes, I certainly did, and did enjoy it very much, because the administrative job there I found very instructive and I learned so much from it. One of the things I think I probably learned was that in administrative work, you are always wrong in the eyes of 10 percent of the people, at least, and I learned how difficult it was if you needed to move the desk of someone who had worked in that very same spot for thirty years. If you needed to move that desk one foot or six inches in one direction or the other, it just isn't going to happen. It's just difficult.

Q: It's not a job in which you can have personal satisfaction, because somebody's always carping.

OSTRANDER: Somebody is always mad, because, "How dare you do this?" and of course, you have to do things.

Q: Could you tell me about the Hungarian refugee situation?

OSTRANDER: Consular work, by the way, is just the opposite of this. The law says the consul is never wrong, on visa cases, anyway, and I found it pretty nice to get back to that. The consular slot there was American citizenship and passport work only for Belgium, and non-immigrant visa work only for the Antwerp consular area. But the immigrant visa work was for all of Belgium and all of Luxembourg, so we really had some interesting people.

Q: You did the work for Brussels, as well?

OSTRANDER: On immigrants. It was interesting, because, of course, it goes back to the days when the only place you immigrated from was the seaport. Of course, that has

now changed. After I left, they moved that immigrant visa office up to Brussels because everybody now leaves by air. So that was left over from the old days, and we still did have a lot of people going out by ship, immigrating. You can take more of your effects that way, I guess.

I've forgotten which part of the immigrant law was passed to permit Hungarian refugees, whose areas of first asylum were in Europe, to move to areas of second asylum, and that was permanent asylum. Many of them wanted that to be the U.S.

Q: What proportion of Hungarians actually had gone to Belgium, as opposed to some other country?

OSTRANDER: They took many, many, many of them—thousands.

Q: A majority?

OSTRANDER: Yes, they did. Belgium is always pretty good at that. I don't know how good they are at providing permanent asylum, but they're always very good at taking in area-first asylum. It's been a long time ago, and I can't remember anything about numbers.

Q: Were you limited by the States as to how many you could let in?

OSTRANDER: Yes, of course. I'm sure the Refugee Act had a limit.

Q: What criteria, for example?

OSTRANDER: Refugees, of course, are not given permanent status. They come in for a time, assuming that once whatever caused them to be refugees will go away and they'll return. In the case of Hungary, this has not happened, but a lot of them, I think, did return of their own accord. I do think that many people run and then decide, “Oh, dear, I've had to leave so many of the family, and they need me back there, so I'd better go back.” So a lot of them do go back. It must be hard for them. But, yes, the criteria are the same as if

they were going to be immigrants. You have to have jobs waiting and this sort of thing; at least you did at that time. A lot of the church groups and a lot of the refugee organizations provided those jobs. I'm sure we got a lot of good citizens out of it.

Q: Yes. We have very strict anti-communist regulations, don't we?

OSTRANDER: True. Very true.

Q: How could you check up on that?

OSTRANDER: It's almost easier if they're coming from behind the curtain than it is when they're not, because if you see someone who has excelled and gone to university and excelled at his profession, you know full well that they've given something to the party and probably are party members. Of course, if they're party members, you can't do much for them. A lot of them were not party members; they were members of youth groups and that sort of thing. Also, of course, if you had to join the party to get a ration card to eat at that time, that sort of thing was forgiven. You would look pretty closely at someone who told you all he wanted to do was to eat, when he was running whatever organization he was in. You would just have to assume that he was doing more than his share. If it was just token membership that was excused.

Q: What about the Belgian Congo exodus?

OSTRANDER: The Congo exploded, very surprisingly to the Belgians, who didn't imagine it could happen to them. In 1960, I think it was, the Belgians were flown out. Anyone who wished to be, could be flown out and flown to Brussels and resettled in Belgium. Many of those, however, wanted to come to the United States, so we got quite a lot of very interesting immigrant visa applicants, many who had come from other countries and had gone to the Congo, many very talented people. I remember a lot of Polish, Ukrainians, people like that, who really did not want to settle in Belgium. That just wasn't their idea; they were frontiersmen. A lot of them went to Australia and were attracted by that. We took

a lot of them, too, and again got a lot of highly-educated and very interesting people. We got a lot of missionaries, too, coming out of the Congo. Those were pretty dangerous days.

I remember, also, that there was absolutely no communication through the embassy from the Congo, and they were using the telex systems of many of the big Belgian firms, companies. Friends of mine in Antwerp, who were in the headquarters of a couple of those firms, brought telegrams to me, or telex messages that they had received, that were reports from the [U.S.] embassy that were headed, “Please deliver to the consulate for the embassy.” So I got to see a lot of that reporting. I also remember that I was very proud because my friends in Belgium said that they found the reporting to be absolutely excellent. They could not rely on their own businessmen there, because the reports were too absolutely emotional over the loss of the Congo, and they could not really believe what was happening. Yet here were these very well-prepared reports coming from the American Embassy, and they said that they realized that those were the only good reports, the only reliable ones. And their own government, too! The Belgian government, of course, it was a highly emotional time for them; they just could not imagine the Congolese would do this to them.

Q: So our consulate couldn't get its messages out?

OSTRANDER: Not for a few days.

Q: So they went through the Belgian businesses, to Antwerp, over to you.

OSTRANDER: Right, and then on to the embassy. They got through, and I thought it was very clever of them to think of that, and very nice of the Belgians to permit that sort of reporting through their facilities.

Q: You mentioned a Sabena flight.

OSTRANDER: Yes. That is, as far as consular work goes, one of the recollections that is very painful. The Sabena flight that was carrying the American skating team to Yugoslavia for the World Competition crashed five minutes before landing in Brussels. The site of the crash was in Antwerp's consular district. We couldn't handle it; we were too few in the consulate. We did handle shipping of the effects back after they were collected. Brussels did a lot of work. People came up from Paris to help out. The FBI came to help with identification. It was grim and gruesome, and the sort of thing that made me realize I don't think any consular officer should ever have to handle more than one plane crash. There should be some sort of a beep or something in the computer that alerts headquarters if somebody who is at a post where there's been an air crash has ever done this before, and then get them out, because it's not something you should ever have to do more than once.

Q: You had trouble with some of the families, I believe.

OSTRANDER: The families, of course, and I suppose that's always the case, to try to get the families to understand that it's an ugly picture and not to come and expect to find the remains of their dear ones looking as if they had died peacefully in bed and an undertaker had laid them out. It's not going to happen. They are not realistic about it and cannot understand what you're trying to tell them.

Q: Didn't you say that one man wanted to see—

OSTRANDER: Right. He brought his children. There was no way to stop him from wanting the coffin opened. Then he was so upset. How had I allowed him to do this? And you wish you'd had a tape recording of all the begging and pleading. “Do not do this.” But I learned a lot through consular work as to what next-of-kins expect and how unrealistic they are. I suppose there is an art. There must be a very diplomatic art as to how to tell them what to expect, without being terribly blunt, but sometimes you have to be very, very blunt.

I did learn that it's a Pollyanna-sounding sort of thing, but what a consular officer must try to provide in the way of services for American citizens who get in trouble overseas, you must look at the citizen who is in trouble and try to think of that person as the person who is nearest and dearest to you, and ask yourself, “What would I want the consul to do for my husband, for my wife, for my mother?” This sort of thing. That sounds, as I say, very Pollyanna-ish, but that is exactly what they're expecting, and you shouldn't lose sight of that. You should try to provide that as best you can. I have spent a lot of time in my career as a consular officer writing back, telling people what the funeral services were like, describing everything from the church service to the burial, this sort of thing. I don't think I've ever gotten many thanks for that. People seem to think that's what is owing to them. There have been a few who have said “thank you,” but I think mighty few. Mighty few, indeed. That goes over a long career of consular work. You get so you don't expect it, and it's always a good surprise. But, you know, I put myself in their place, too, and I think I would understand that somebody had gone out of their way.

Q: Exactly.

OSTRANDER: They never seem to see it. They hate what has happened and have to take it out on somebody. What they want to do is take it out on the American government. Somebody has got to be to blame, and you happen to be the American government, so you're going to take it. I think that's too bad.

Q: Did you ever have welfare cases where American people were stranded and came in and expected you to put up money?

OSTRANDER: Oh, that's daily, absolutely daily.

Q: Where do you suppose they get that idea?

OSTRANDER: They pay their taxes. This is what they say. “I always heard that if I got in trouble, the American government would take care of me.” There are, of course, loans,

but loans in desperation. Mainly what you do is, “Who can I get in touch with to send you money from your family?”

Q: Where is the money from in the fund for the desperation loans?

OSTRANDER: The government does provide, I think, a pittance that you have to repay if you're ever going to get another passport, this sort of thing. I'm not really up on this because I haven't done consular work in many, many, many years. That's where the work-a-ways would come in handy. But you've got to exhaust all possibilities of getting any money before you can make a loan. There are very, very few people who don't have other ways, that there isn't somebody that they can contact and get some money from. But, also, if you're lucky, if you're in a city where there's a large American colony, they often have a fund that the American consul can draw on for particularly worthy cases, but they're not going to support some bum, that's for sure. There are worthy cases, and in Antwerp I had that. In Mexico City, we had it.

Q: People who are starving, in other words?

OSTRANDER: Yes, and even then there are church groups in Antwerp. Also there was a seamen's association, so if these people were people who had missed their ships or something like that, they could be helped out. Church groups. The Salvation Army would usually take somebody for a few days for next to nothing. A good consular officer, of course, is always well connected with those groups.

Q: Did you yourself have to go down to the port and do things for seamen who were in trouble?

OSTRANDER: In Antwerp we were very lucky. We had a Coast Guard officer assigned. The U.S. Coast Guard had an office in Le Havre, I think, and also in Antwerp. I think that office later moved to Rotterdam. I can remember one case that a seaman, who was in jail —and I never went to see those; I always sent the Coast Guard, because they understood

the cases—I can remember one case in particular where the seaman did not want to see anybody from the U.S. Coast Guard; he wanted the consul. He didn't want to talk to anybody who knew anything about the sea. I suspect that's it. Or about his case. But I remember when I walked in, he said, “Oh, my God, it's a woman! Send me back the Coast Guard officer.” This was early on, as you can recall, and he wasn't prepared for that at all.

As usual, if you get consular officers talking about consular cases, it can go on forever, because you never have the same one twice—ever.

Q: Fascinating. But it can be grim.

OSTRANDER: It can be grim, and especially if you're in a place where there are a lot of tourists. Of course, Europe and the Caribbean, which are my two areas, are always full of tourists. They always seem to be in trouble, and I keep thinking surely there are people who come abroad who don't get in trouble. And there must be millions, but, of course, you never hear about that.

Q: You were on that job for about two years?

OSTRANDER: In the consular job, yes. In administration two years, and in consular two years. At almost exactly four years to the day, I was transferred back to Washington to a personnel job, placement officer, I think it was.

Q: Tell me about that.

OSTRANDER: I was an FSO-5 in 1961. I went to Antwerp in '57. In those days, personnel for Foreign Service was divided by regions. Within geographic regions, for instance, in the European region, you would have an officer who had a couple of countries. That officer was responsible for anybody in his posts—and I mean everybody in those posts. When this person was coming out of the post, it would be this officer's responsibility to make sure that whatever his choices were, were considered, and to represent him on the placement

panel. Then that person became the property, so to speak, of another officer, once his assignment was decided and he was going to be entering another officer's bailiwick. I found it a very good system, because one officer would know everybody at a post and would know whether or not somebody new coming in would fit in, would be able to fill a particular need of that post. It wasn't so fragmented somehow as it is now. And whether a secretary coming into that post would fit in with the group, or whether there was somebody else, perhaps, at a consulate that might want to transfer to the embassy, and that there was somebody else coming along who could fill that job back at the consulate better. It was just a placement job, which it isn't now.

Q: More efficient, I would think.

OSTRANDER: Much more efficient, I found, and better for career development, better for forming a compatible group in which all the needs were met. The officer himself did not have that much say in where he was going as he does today, but I'm not sure the officers today have a good idea as to what is good for their careers. Half of them put themselves into positions they can't carry off.

Q: Because they can't be objective.

OSTRANDER: That's right. How would they know that's the job they want? Anyway, Washington was also a regional area at that time, and we had a Washington assignments office—WFS. What did that mean? Washington Foreign Service, I guess. They were good bosses. One of them was Frank Carlucci [Carlucci became Secretary of Defense in 1987]. In Washington assignments, we had the Department split by bureau [for officer personnel], but I was responsible for all bureaus, as I represented staff corps people. It was a very interesting assignment. The staff corps at that point were not expected to come back to Washington, and there were no jobs in Washington for them. When they had to come back to Washington, I had really to call up bureaus and beg people to put them to work. It was very difficult on secretaries, for instance, because I would have to get very low level

Civil Service jobs for the Foreign Service secretaries, who were high-powered, because otherwise you would be putting the Civil Service secretary out of a job, because she's not going to get the salary if she's not working in the high level position.

Q: What happened to the salary of the person coming back? The salary went with the person? "Man-in-rank?"

OSTRANDER: The salary went with the person. So if I could get them to set aside a GS-3 or GS-4 job, then use that position and put it in the front office, it was a real diplomatic-type thing to talk people into this. It did not make for good interoffice relationships among the secretarial or the clerical group. You can well imagine the problems that that caused.

Q: I gather from what you say that the reason these people did come back was for some sort of a hardship?

OSTRANDER: They all had problems of one sort or another. They might have their own medical difficulties. Some of them could not work. Some of them needed to work, but you had to arrange for maybe a day off every so often for treatment, and make that clear to the bureau, but without saying anything of what was wrong. Many of them had run into difficulties of one sort or another overseas and had to come back for disciplinary action. Some of them had problems at home that had to be untangled. Some of them had aging parents who had to be looked after.

It was a job in which you had to juggle sensitivities. The bureaus were usually very nice. Some of them you could tell exactly what was wrong; others leapt to all kinds of wrong conclusions. Sometimes disciplinary problems were worked out in two or three months, and the person was found absolutely and utterly innocent, then would go back overseas. In the meantime, their jobs had been given to other people. It was a real personnel job, believe me. I had to hold hands; I had to walk a very fine line.

Q: Like being a social worker.

OSTRANDER: Yes. I had to help as much as I could, and yet try not to get too awfully involved in some of the cases. An awful lot of compassion involved, a lot of women, but not entirely so.

Q: Would communicators come under you in a situation like this?

OSTRANDER: Yes, they did. A lot of people can get in an awful lot of trouble overseas. [Laughter] At that time, I think we tried to do an awfully good job of helping people out and yet not giving in too much if these people were really guilty of any wrongdoing. Of course, a lot of times they just resigned before any real decision was made or any guilt was established.

The other half of the job was new Foreign Service secretaries and passport clerks and pouch clerks and communicators who were just brought into the Foreign Service. We'd put them to work for eight or nine months here, maybe sometimes a little longer, while they were waiting for their security clearances. Maybe we still do that; I don't know. But for that period of time, I was the Foreign Service personnel officer for these people. Elsie Crimm pretty well took care of the code clerks, and Betty Kane took care of the budget and fiscal people. I worked very closely with them. When the time came to get the jobs overseas, the first assignments overseas, I represented them on the panel. When the people who had had problems back here also were now ready to go back overseas, their family problems or their own personal problems or whatever it was, medical problems, were all cured and taken care of, then I represented them on panel and tried to get them the proper jobs overseas. Sometimes they went out with medical limitations, sometimes they went out with other kinds of limitations. Sometimes security people wanted them close to home in case something might be coming up later, but there was no point in keeping them here during that time, so it was pretty tricky.

Q: What was this office called?

OSTRANDER: I was placement officer for Washington assignments for staff corps. I replaced Shirley Green, who later married Seymour Fine. Shirley's still around. She's retired from the Foreign Service, but oh, my, I admired that woman so much and still do. Shirley was the first one to hold this position and had come into the Foreign Service from the White House. She had had a tour, I think, up in Ottawa or someplace like that. Then she had come back to Washington to do this job, but she had come from Harry Truman's White House, where she was his social secretary. There was a flair about her (and, I'm sure, still is), a creative flair. I just don't quite know what you would call it. But I remember in Harry Truman's book he mentioned that he would never give a White House party if Shirley Green didn't run it. I could understand this after being to a few of Shirley's parties. She taught me the ropes. She taught me the ropes about the personnel job that I was going into, gave me a lot of good pointers, and I really think she taught me about personnel work. She went on as personnel officer in Paris and married Seymour in Paris.

Q: Did you enjoy this work?

OSTRANDER: I think I'm good at placement. I think I'm very good at sizing up a person and a job and matching them. I probably have higher expectations for people than they do for themselves, but I think I'm pretty good at measuring what they are capable of, and getting the right person into the right job for both the benefit of the government and the person.

Q: That's quite a skill.

OSTRANDER:I think I'm very good at that. I had a couple more jobs in which I did that later, and I think I was good at those, too. I don't know whether I would say I enjoyed it or not. I'll tell you what I learned from it. I can remember those first weeks that I nearly went crazy because I just simply didn't understand the composition of the Department of State and the bureaus and all the office symbols and that sort of thing. But I learned all of those while I was here, and I got to know personally every executive officer and personnel officer

in this building. That still is paying off, because an awful lot of them are still around and in a lot higher grade jobs than they were then. A lot of those people are still my good friends.

Q: What would you say you had learned from the job as a consular officer? That's dealing with people, also.

OSTRANDER: True. I'm not sure I learned anything in Antwerp that I didn't know before from my consular work, but what I learned as a consular officer was what is expected and how to make the contacts outside of the office, perhaps, that you're going to have to make because you're going to need them in order to get the fairest deal for American citizens when they're in trouble. There are a lot of jobs in the Foreign Service that don't teach you that. A lot of them, I think you're only thinking of what's going on in your own little office, and you've got to learn to think “outside.”

Q: It gives you the big picture.

OSTRANDER: It gives you the big picture, and how much you're going to need those contacts. Consular work also teaches you how to manage a large group of people to accomplish a specific purpose. In many jobs in the Foreign Service, you're going to have only one or two people and your job is going to be reporting back to Washington. That's all you're going to have to do, really, although you may have a couple of locals to deal with and maybe a secretary and maybe how to divide up the work with another officer in a political section or economic section. Consular work, however, especially if you were mainly in visas, as I was, you're going to have huge sections and you're going to have to learn how to divide that work up so that at the end of the month you've accomplished what you were required to accomplish.

Q: It seems to me those two jobs certainly helped you on your road to being an ambassador, because you learned how to get along with people outside the department, how to divide work.

OSTRANDER: I was trying to think, also, of The Hague, what I learned there. I thought of that the other night, that I wanted to say that most people hated the records and communications work. I found that I was the only person in the Netherlands that had an opportunity to read every single piece of paper that came into that American Embassy. I knew everything that went to the military, that went to all of the branches of the American government that were assigned in The Hague, a NATO capital. I read everything coming in from the leftover stuff out of Indonesia, because in 1949, of course, Indonesia became independent and there was still a lot of work going on on that. I had all those records and had to sort them out and decide what to destroy and what not, so I had the whole inside picture on Indonesia. I had everything from the Netherlands-Antilles and from Suriname. Like it or not, I followed that whole period and had to understand it, and although the work was—Lord, you could work forever and not catch up with it at all, but still I found that at the end of that tour in the Netherlands, I probably knew more, because everybody else was compartmentalized, and I'd seen it all. So back to the theory that it may be tedious, but there's something to be gained out of it.

Q: You were developing all this time a tremendous background for the job you didn't know you were going to do.

OSTRANDER: Precisely. You never can tell. Don't skip anything. Don't skip over anything because you think, “Oh, what a bore.” Lord knows what may turn up later.

Q: Good advice for young people.

OSTRANDER: I don't know what else to say about Washington. I lived in Arlington [Virginia] in a very nice apartment, got to know an awful lot of Foreign Service personnel officers. It was quite a group at that time, a good group. Evelyn Blue, Jean Farr, Gerry Oliva, these names would ring bells to an awful lot of people in the Foreign Service.

Q: What happened to many of them?

OSTRANDER: Helen Webb died. I think they've all retired. I was younger than most of them. I still see Evelyn Blue; she lives over here in Columbia Plaza. I see her every now and then.

Q: You were there three years. Was that about enough for that kind of a job?

OSTRANDER: Yes, it certainly was. I think I had learned all there was to learn out of it. I picked my own job from there and decided that I wanted to go back into consular work, and I picked Mexico City, to run the immigrant visa section.

Q: You were able to do this because you knew the right people?

OSTRANDER: I went around and talked to them. They wanted me. They knew me in personnel and knew I was a conscientious worker. I looked at a lot of jobs. I remember one of them was the consular officer in Cairo, which sounded kind of interesting. Then I heard that NEA thought that would be an interesting idea to send a woman to the Middle East, and I thought, “Oh, boy, I don't want to be that. I'd just as soon somebody else did that.” Then I saw the job in Mexico City. I suppose I'm still longing for Havana again somewhere in the back of my mind.

The immigrant visa section in Mexico City needed a chief, and it was the right grade, an FSO-4 at the time. So off I went to do that job. I was probably a very good choice for it, because I can remember that when I walked into the office for the first time, the entire waiting room was full of Cubans, and I knew most of them. It was the exodus from Cuba, and we were setting up the Cuban program there. I certainly understood that and was able to carry on.

I remember my first visa applicant. I had no sooner sat down and put my purse into the desk drawer than my secretary, Georgina, walked in and said, “Juanita Castro is applying for a visa and wants to see you.” This was Fidel's sister. I leaned over and took my purse

out of the desk and said, “I don't think I want this job at all.” She, of course, was a defector, and those are very difficult visa cases.

Q: How had she gotten out?

OSTRANDER: I suspect Fidel was delighted to see her go. You had to have an exit permit at the time. I got to know her pretty well, and she finally got her visa.

Q: Is she still in this country?

OSTRANDER: Yes.

Q: She got an immigrant visa?

OSTRANDER: Yes.

Actually, I suppose I might have considered it as a premonition of what was to come later. After about six months on that job running the immigrant section, they set up in the visa section in Mexico City a new job, which was to be the assistant to the head of the whole visa section. It was to take care of what I learned to call the “no win” cases, the cases that were going to make headlines whether you issued the visa or refused the visa. You were going to insult half the population and upset half the population, no matter what you did. That was the job I got. It was awful. There were some fifty or sixty cases a day of those, and it was constant pressure. I learned to hate everything that the Mexico City consular section had to offer, while adoring living in Mexico City.

I can remember deciding it was time to go through the visa files and take out all of these refused visa cases as I came across them, and try to get reversed some of the previous 1952 rulings of ineligibility at the time of [Senator Joseph] McCarthy; trying to get some of those reviewed and reversed, because in McCarthy's era, if you were a wife of a communist, you were ineligible for a visa, for instance. There had been policy evolved later that you would have to be a party member yourself before you were ineligible. There was

also involuntary membership. That whole theory had evolved later. So I spent a lot of time doing that.

Q: Were those eligibility rulings actually changed?

OSTRANDER: Yes, they were. But a lot of them, there just simply wasn't enough evidence to sustain a finding of ineligibility. I did get a lot of those changed, and just sent them in, just poured them in as fast as I could—because we were insulting so many of the Europeans who had immigrated to Mexico and were living there. An awful lot of people in Europe joined the Communist Party as a protest to Naziism, because it was only the communists that were fighting the Nazis. I thought it was time to look again at some of these cases, and I did get a lot of them reversed. I doubt if any of those people ever realized that anything special was done for them, but it was a real job. The Mexicans, of course, and the South Americans who were in Mexico, who were borderline cases, it was just a list of all of the VIPs, you know—the poets, the writers. That's just what the situation was. Every one of them, no matter what you did, you were going to be wrong.

It was a hard job, and I never want another one like it again, and I never, ever want to go back to Mexico City in the consular section. I was offered several times to go back as consul general. No way. Just no way.

Q: But you still love Mexico City?

OSTRANDER: Oh, I still love Mexico. I absolutely adore Mexico. Consular work in Mexico is unique and it's something that is a lot better now than it ever was when I was there. I can remember when I used to draw up the duty roster, even in the visa section we had to stand duty for protection cases. We were averaging something like three deaths a day. It was just awful. So if you were in the visa section or in any section, when you were on duty, which was a week at a time, you were up all night, you were working all day. And they were horrible cases, really grizzly stuff. They've got a lot more help now than they did

then. I can remember learning in Mexico City that when the work takes more than twenty-four hours a day, you're lost. You're understaffed. Something is wrong.

I started to tell you about this one officer. I remember she came to me and I showed her the roster. We had a lot of officers then, too. She wouldn't be on duty again for another six months, and she looked at me and she said, “Six months. With any luck, I'll be dead by then.” And I knew just how she felt, because it was that bad. [Laughter] Yet we had a wonderful group there and I loved them all. We worked well together and it was a good team.

Q: Heaven help you if you fell out with all that workload.

OSTRANDER: Right. It was grim.

Q: How long did you do that particular facet of it, the “no win” cases?

OSTRANDER: The whole time. It was not a happy personnel situation that's for sure. There were an awful lot of problems. It was also the time that they decided that Mexicans would get border crossing cards rather than visas. That sounded like it would save work. But what it meant was that we had two procedures going on at the same time, the issuance of border crossing cards under the Immigration Service set of regulations. We didn't have any computers at the time, either. And on the non-immigrant visa side of it. The border crossing card was only good for a certain amount of time to visit the United States coming in from Mexico. Many Mexicans go to Europe, so they would have to have both documents. Sometimes they transited the United States, so they might end up having three visas and one border crossing card. We buried ourselves in so much work, it was just ridiculous.

Q: You were really understaffed.

OSTRANDER: We were doing it to ourselves. It just was crazy. They have backed away from that. What seemed like a good idea at the time did not turn out to be a good idea.

Q: They don't have the border passes now?

OSTRANDER: Still at the border, but not down into Mexico City. I don't think they do that any more at all. We still do an awful lot of consular visa work that I feel isn't necessary. There are a lot of countries in this world that we shouldn't be issuing visas to.

Q: You have to issue them to Europe, as you say.

OSTRANDER: Right. I think an awful lot of Europeans really shouldn't have to have visas to come to the United States. I wish the Congress would act on that.

Q: Do we make all Europeans obtain a visa?

OSTRANDER: Of course. Everybody has to have a visa except the native-born Canadians. I'm sure there are some exceptions to that, too.

Q: You mean the Queen, maybe, didn't have to?

OSTRANDER: I'm sure you get a waiver for her, but you would still have to do a waiver. I just think that in the days of thinking we should be cutting back on work and putting people to better use, and in days when we just really can't afford to be spending that kind of money, the Congress should act to release us from that.

Q: How is it that we don't need visas to go to France or Italy or England?

OSTRANDER: They have internal controls, central internal control. Every night you go to a hotel, you turn in your passport and that's checked out. We don't have that. What the U.S. has always done is check you in at the border and check you out at the border, and anything you do in the middle, you're on your own.

Q: How would you get around this, then? Because people could get lost very easily in the United States.

OSTRANDER: And do, whether they have the visas or not. So, therefore, you look at the record of the countries that the people habitually go back to. You would have an inspection. The consular bureau has worked up a law, the Congress and the administration have presented bills, so they've looking into all that sort of thing, and made their recommendations. It just seems to me that you take all those people in England issuing visas, and Germany and Japan, issuing all these visas, even with facsimile signatures, because it's so routine, and put them to work where you do have an awful lot of people who do overstay.

Anyway, I make my pitch and the visa office makes its pitch, and it just doesn't seem to get through Congress.

Q: I wonder why. No lobby for it, I guess.

OSTRANDER: There is an awful lot of thought that somebody's going to cry "discrimination," because if you do it for the British, why don't you do it for everybody?

Q: Of course. Discrimination or racism or whatever.

OSTRANDER: That's right. I think the answer to that is to look at the record. How many of you overstayed? How many of you disappeared? How many of them didn't? But it's not that easy, and I am the first to agree to that.

Q: But we are tying up people.

OSTRANDER: I think so, too. Maybe they're learning a lot and maybe they're not. I just think that we need their services elsewhere.

Q: This work is very hard, Nancy, and as you say, it's just overwhelming.

OSTRANDER: It causes a lot of burnout, yes.

Q: Was it interesting?

OSTRANDER: When I look back on it, yes. I can remember that one of Mexico's most famous painters, he was very much involved in the murder of Trotsky and was sent away for twenty years in jail. I kept thinking, “I bet you anything that when he gets out of jail, the first thing he does is walk in here for a visa.” And I can remember the day I was transferred from Mexico to Jamaica, and I thought, “I'm not going to have to worry about Siqueiros!” And he applied the next week. The next week, his twenty years was up. I could see the time coming. So somebody else had to handle that. But that's the sort of thing.

Another person still writes about how badly he was treated at the American Embassy in Mexico, and I don't think he understands the few times he got into the United States was when I was down there getting him in. Because he was a fine poet in spite of his political beliefs, I thought he could come up and lecture. That's the sort of case I had.

I can remember also Dolores del Rio.

Q: What was wrong with Dolores?

OSTRANDER: Dolores was always coming up to the U.S. under contract, and although Dolores was eligible for a visa, we did have to look closely at her, because she toyed around with some causes that might give question, so you always kind of wondered what she'd been up to in the last six months. She was always all right. Dolores del Rio, old-time actress, the flamboyant, extrovert of the star period, of the real Hollywood star, always came at the lunch hour, because she knew that it would take a long time and that because consular officers were out to lunch and were trying to cover this, she could parade around a crowded visa section and play to that audience. She was wonderful.

Q: She enjoyed being a star.

OSTRANDER: Oh, yes. Which reminds me, there's only one other that did the same thing, and I've seen a lot of stars. That's going back to Havana—Josephine Baker came in. She had on each eyelid five eyelashes that were at least three inches long. I loved it! Of course, she was out of Paris, and you could not issue her a non-immigrant visa without checking with her home port, her home city. Those were the times we sent telegrams. I can still see her batting those eyelashes and saying, “Phone Paris.”

Q: Had she given up her U.S. citizenship?

OSTRANDER: Oh, yes. She was not a U.S. citizen at the time; she was French. I can remember phoning Paris to talk about Josephine Baker, who was at my desk. She was a star, too, that's all there was to it.

Q: Oh, yes, indeed.

OSTRANDER: I can also remember, in Havana, telling somebody whose name was not that on his passport, “Did you know you look just like Paul Muni,” and being told he was Paul Muni.

Q: He traveled by his real name?

OSTRANDER: Yes. Star that he was, he had none of that flamboyant sort of thing.

Q: What was Muni's nationality?

OSTRANDER: I'm not sure.

Q: So you said to him, “You know you look just like Paul Muni?”

OSTRANDER: “Did anybody ever tell you you look just like Paul Muni?” “I am Paul Muni.” [Laughter]

Where are we now?

Q: We're in Mexico, and I think you're about to have burnout.

OSTRANDER: That was 1967. My mother died when I was in Mexico, and I was overdue for about a year on my home leave, so that was arranged for me very quickly so I could get out. I appreciated that. I spent the summer at home trying to untangle things. My sister was ill, I was taking care of her children, trying to get everything untangled. The State Department was very kind and I had my full home leave. It was maybe only two or three weeks, at that. But I did come into Washington and tell them at that time, in September, that I really felt that they could do away with that job, if they were trying to cut down on something. I was handling all of the advisory opinions, all of the really difficult cases. The theory then was—and it was a good theory—that if you find a problem in a long visa line of non-immigrant visas, take the problem out so that the line will move, but I didn't really feel that the new officers were learning anything. Every time they had a good case that really got into nitty-gritty, they came and dumped it on me. Besides, I didn't know how much more of this I could stand. It was three years, anyway.

At that time, Washington was unable to fill the chief consular job in Kingston. They had sent one person who had had a nervous breakdown shortly after he arrived. This was 1967. Jamaica had become independent in 1965, something like that. There was a new immigration law which took effect in about 1967, which moved the immigration quota for Jamaica from 200 a year, which it was as a British dependency, to 20,000 a year. That became effective in '67, and the day it became effective, I would suggest that a majority of Jamaicans walked in and registered for immigration at the American Embassy.

So the consul general they had sent had gone around the bend in a very short time, and they had sent a new one, Vern McAninch. Vern wanted to try his hand at administration, so although he was running the consular section, he moved upstairs. They had to find somebody for the consular work and they couldn't. Nobody in his right mind would go into that mess, and I mean mess. So they found me, and I said I'd be happy to go.

Well, I took one look at that section. The section had been two rooms, small rooms, when there were only 200 a year, and the bank next door had moved out, so Vern had arranged to get part of their ground space. They had torn up the floors and it was a dirt floor, and raining a lot. They were trying to put tile down, but the tile layers had gone on strike. We had planks over the mud. I have never seen anything quite like that.

Q: A physical mess.

OSTRANDER: It was a physical mess. Again, if you opened drawers of desks, you would find applications for visas that nobody had ever even acknowledged, let alone tell people what the next step was. It was so far behind, it was incredible.

Q: Vern was too busy building his empire, was he?

OSTRANDER: With all due respect, it had just been sort of make-do. I don't know what was going on. It was not Vern's bag, that's for sure. Just sitting down and working on things one page at a time is not for Vern McAninch. I'm not bad at that. As a matter of fact, if the day is over and I see that there's a pile like this that's taken care of, I feel pretty good. Besides, women, I think, have more patience for that sort of thing than men do, anyway. Still, I used to think, “If somebody showed me a warehouse full of dirty dishes and told me that they had to be washed, I would do it, but I would be mighty unhappy doing it, and I would hate every bit of it.” It's not a job that couldn't be done; it's “who wants to?” I think I went home and cried every night for the first six months I was there. But I did bring order out of that chaos and found that there were an awful lot of really good clerks, local

clerks, and brand-new, “retread” officers, who were willing to sit down and do the job if somebody would just tell them where to tackle it. What they needed was somebody to run it. I had something like ten officers. They were ambassadors' secretaries, who wanted what they would call an “excursion tour” now, but who really wanted to be commissioned, wanted to be integrated, and others were pouch clerks, as we were getting away from that. There were former Marine guards who had joined the Foreign Service. There were political officers who were about to get selected out, but were given one more chance. I have never seen anything quite like it. Those folks were given a half-day's training and sent to me, into this mess. Well, you can imagine what their morale was. There were also two or three brand-new FSO-8s, I think they were, at the time. I can assure you that this wasn't their idea of what should be the lot of somebody who wanted to be a political or economic officer. But they were good, you know. It also brought to mind that a good FSO does whatever he's given to do and does it well. None of this, “I'm not going to stamp these.” They did it, and they did it well.

I tried everything I could think of to give them other things that they could do. I can remember one of them became involved in getting to know youth groups at universities and did reporting on the side, on the youth of Jamaica and what they were thinking. Another one I got a rotation job so she could go into the USIA. But anyway, I did everything I could, and I got a superior honor award for the management of that. It did get untangled. We broke all the records for immigrant visa issuance at that place.

But mainly what we did was answer the mail and get a routine going on immigration so that they didn't feel that they had to come down to the embassy every day because nobody ever answered the mail. I can remember I found one officer who, when there was too much mail to answer, decided not to answer any of the mail from American citizens. You can imagine what that caused. This means phone calls from the States, and not only from the States, but from every congressman and senator that you could think of. It just was creating work. So anyway, a little instruction on management went a long, long way.

I also had a DCM who said, “Tell us what you want and we'll get it.” Vern backed me up on stuff out of administration that I had to have. So anyway, it got done, but it was physically exhausting, absolutely physically exhausting.

We had a team there and we were all so loyal to each other.

Q: How many people did you have under you at any given time?

OSTRANDER: There were well over twenty there, maybe twenty-five, I'm not sure. I'm talking mainly here about visas, but it was all consular work, and I had a superb passport and citizenship officer. I didn't often have to get into that work, thank God. I should have, but she was very good. I just had to tell her, “I've got to untangle this visa mess before I can even think.” We had well over a million tourists a year in Jamaica, well over a million. Some of them needed help. They died, too, up at Montego Bay, and got into trouble and got into jail. When I look back on it, I think the first thing I did was call in all the local employees and say, “I'm sure that each and every one of you has good ways that we can streamline this.” Then I got big charts on the wall to show where the bulk of it was going. Once they could see progress and once they realized a pattern, they were ready to just knock themselves out for it, and did so.

I think I learned from that that if you can begin to see that it's getting better and that there's life after that mess, why, you get a lot of loyalty and a lot of hard work out of people. I got a lot of promotions for a lot of people out of that, too. I really sat down and redid all the position descriptions for that entire section, and the local help was so underpaid compared to what was going on in the embassy side of it. I can understand why nobody had had time to do this.

Q: That's a big job, though, that job description business.

OSTRANDER: Come to think of it, I did that in Mexico, too.

Q: That was for the locals, as well as the rest?

OSTRANDER: Yes. Actually, in Mexico it was only for the locals, because they were the ones. I'm always the one that gets that stuff dumped on her.

Q: That's because you'll do it. You didn't have a nervous breakdown there, though.

OSTRANDER: No, I did not. I thrived on it, as a matter of fact. As a matter of fact, I think I thrived on it because you could see the progress, and I was getting credit for it and I had an ambassador and a DCM and an administrative officer, even those that came after, who were—I can hear the DCM right now, David Wilkins, say, “Nancy, tell us what you want and we'll see that you get it.” And this just makes all the difference. I learned to love Jamaica. Not too many people liked Jamaica, and still don't.

Q: Was it dangerous when you were there?

OSTRANDER: Oh, yes. Oh, yes. Quite.

Q: Did you have to carry a weapon?

OSTRANDER: No, no. And I wouldn't have if I'd had to.

Q: But they were having trouble when you were there?

OSTRANDER: Yes, they were having all kinds of race riots, burning buses, hitting people on the head, this sort of thing.

Q: Did you have a rape gate in your house?

OSTRANDER: No, we had guards. They gave us guards. I don't know, I'm just not a frightened person. I just can't live that way. I soon got rid of the guard, because he wanted

me to provide him with food all night long and beer all night long, and there were all these beer bottles all over everything. I just got myself a dog. [Laughter]

Q: Do you have any anecdotes that you remember about this time when there were all these riots? Were you ever in physical danger?

OSTRANDER: Most of the wives sat around and talked, and people would find white chickens, with the necks wrung, floating in their swimming pools and this sort of thing. That was obeah, and it was a threat. People would talk about it a lot and they would sort of fan the flames of each other's panic. I just can't listen to this sort of thing. I'm firmly convinced that bad things can happen, but you can also ruin your life sitting around and waiting for them to happen, and you can become housebound. I think what you've got to do is learn where it is that you can go that's safe. I don't want to downplay a lot of the danger that people ultimately got into, but I wouldn't go into West Kingston for anything on earth then or now or any other time. There are just places that you don't want to flaunt it, and you don't want to be out all hours of the night when there are problems.

Q: Did you have to work late? If you did, how did you get home?

OSTRANDER: I didn't work late, that I recall, although there were times when I had to go down, when I was on duty. We were in the middle of town at that time, too. The embassy now is up and sort of out of the danger zone. It was down by the waterfront, on Duke Street. That was a dangerous area. We had some things befall us in the embassy family, and maybe it did get worse later, but I got sick to death about hearing how dangerous it was in Jamaica, because I had lived through it, and I just feel that you can ruin your life by living behind a locked door.

I think you can invite problems, yet I also realize that things are going to happen to people even if they're not invited. One of the girls was raped while I was there, one of the gals in the embassy. They got her out of there fast. I think she left the patio doors unlocked. I don't know what the answer is, but I know that the only two times in my life I've ever been

robbed were in Arlington, Virginia, in forty years in the Foreign Service. I don't want to tempt the fates.

Q: But you took good care.

OSTRANDER: I think I did, and I think I lived in an area and had a dog and all these sorts of things, but I just simply can't be worried about it.

Q: It was perhaps worse among the wives, wasn't it?

OSTRANDER: Oh, yes, who didn't have anything to do, of course, or not enough to do. They did nothing but feed on these problems. I know one of the junior officers' wives was threatened while she was at home one day. Somebody walked in and threatened her. Of course, he just wanted to be transferred immediately.

Q: But nobody was actually beaten up, were they?

OSTRANDER: The gal was raped. We had one officer who went out to cover a political riot and was beaten over the head, his head split open, and his car smashed up. But that was in the line of duty, you know. If you go to a political rally that is apt to get out of hand, and does, why, it's too bad that this has happened, but he knew it when he went out to cover it. He wasn't complaining.

Q: That might be a case where you wouldn't want to send a woman political officer.

OSTRANDER: I suppose that's correct, if there's danger of riot. Yet, again, she might not have had her head split open.

Q: Who can say?

OSTRANDER: Who can say? You're quite right. Anyway, I left Jamaica and I haven't been back since, in spite of all of this, but I will go back some day.

Q: Did you travel a lot while you were there?

OSTRANDER: Oh, you couldn't get away too much, but I did get up to Montego Bay for a couple of long weekends. I can remember one lovely time that a bunch of us, about twenty of us, of the embassy gals, went to Frenchmen's Cove, which was the most—I think it cost $1,500 a week at that time, which was the most expensive place. But in the month of October, they closed to the public to redo everything, and you could go there for ten dollars a day. So we went up and took one of the beautiful beach houses and just had a wonderful time. That's a place where each person has an individual golf cart to whip around in. We had a marvelous time, at only ten bucks a night. Of course, we didn't have anybody waiting on us. It was fun, and I loved the place. I really did. But then, I'm a Caribbean whatever.

Q: You seem to love every post you've been, except Mexico City. But even then, you loved Mexico City.

OSTRANDER: I loved the city, but I certainly didn't like that work, and I didn't like working in The Hague. I liked that city. I think what I've tried to do is learn to split—I really didn't like The Hague. It's the most beautiful city I've ever been in, but the people were very cold.

Q: You mean in the embassy?

OSTRANDER: No, the embassy was fine.

Q: So you sort of split your work and your social life?

OSTRANDER: There are things that detract from every post you're ever in. What you like at one post is not there at the next.

Q: But you do like warm weather, don't you?

OSTRANDER: Oh, yes. I used to say I'm like a tropical blossom. I really flourish in the warmth.

Q: All those years in northern Europe, than which there is nothing more dour.

OSTRANDER: Just really awful. But you have things to make up for it, that's for sure.

Q: Did you used to travel to Paris and other European capitals?

OSTRANDER: Oh, yes. Whenever I could get away, I did. I had that feeling when I went to The Hague. It was only to be for a year, to fill in. It was a direct transfer, and I was going to fill in for a year. Then they left me two years and brought me back and said, “You'll be given a direct transfer in another year.” Okay. After a year, I was transferred down to Belgium, where it was only going to be for another year, because then I would have home leave. So for seven years, I was going to be leaving in only one more year. I felt like, “You'll never be back this way again, so you can't afford to miss this, you can't afford to miss that.” I almost went broke with all the things I couldn't afford to miss, and if I'd known it was going to be seven years, I could have taken it a little easier. But it was hard to get away from the work, but certainly every chance I could, I did. I saw pretty much of it, at least northern Europe.

Q: To wrap up for today, do you want to tell me anything else about Jamaica? You have already said what you learned about running a place, that if you can make people see that progress is being made, you can get their loyalty. Any other bits of wisdom that you can pass on?

OSTRANDER: That I learned out of Jamaica? I suppose the importance of teamwork.

Q: And praise, too?

OSTRANDER: Oh, yes! I got full credit for what happened there.

Q: And you did it by praising your own people, didn't you?

OSTRANDER: I certainly praised them. There wasn't a year that went by that we didn't have a meritorious award, for the section, anyway. That helps. As far as management goes, with that many Foreign Service nationals, you must have a promotion chain. If you're going into that big a section, you want something that can give somebody a thirty- or thirty-five year career straight up the ladder, and they must be able to see that, starting at the bottom, that there are promotion opportunities and that there's going to be a turnover, and that they're going to progress up the ladder. Otherwise, you're going to be losing them to AID, you're going to be losing them to the administrative section, they're going to go to work for the bank down the street. You're just going to lose them like crazy. But once you can show them that, then they can see it happening, it just makes a lot of difference.

Q: How many local employees did you have there?

OSTRANDER: The immigrant section was big. I think it was about twenty locals and about ten Americans, give or take three or four on either side.

Q: Did you find three years was about all you wanted of that?

OSTRANDER: I wasn't ready to leave. I was just beginning to enjoy it, because it was just untangled, except that it was time to leave. My experience in Foreign Service tells me that my third year I'm really doing a superb job. The fourth year, it's old and you're beginning to wish, “Oh, dear, is that report due again?” This sort of thing. But that third year, at least that's been my experience, in the third year, the government is really getting double its investment out of me. The fourth year, it's past the point of diminishing returns, although I'm still giving more than enough, but the challenge has gone and it's time to be thinking of what's coming next. I also felt that it was time to come to work in Washington in consular work, if that's what was going to be my lot. That job in Kingston, which at that time was an FSO-3, which is now the FSO-1 job, is now an MC [Minister Counselor] job.

Q: I wouldn't doubt it.

OSTRANDER: Frankly, I think it's because they couldn't get anybody to fill it, so they just kept hiking it up higher and higher. But I would say that in my estimation, there were only two things happening in Jamaica at that time that were of concern to the U.S., two major issues: One was bauxite, the other, immigration.

Continuation of interview: June 11, 1986

Q: Before we go on, I wonder if we could clear up a couple of little details. The first one is the names of your parents.

OSTRANDER: Joseph Ostrander. He had no middle name. And mother's name was Georgia Guinevere. My grandfather was reading King Arthur at the time. It was also his tenth child, and none was named for him. His name was George. He named my mother George, much to my grandmother's horror, but she took my mother over to have her baptized, and said the name was Georgia, and took care of that. He would never call her that then, after that. He always called her Guin. So everybody else called her Guin. I think a lot of people didn't ever know that her first name was Georgia. It's a scream. He wanted one of the ten to be named for himself.

Q: What was your father's occupation? We didn't get that either.

OSTRANDER: Printer and publisher.

Q: Did you ever write for the school paper, or edit a school paper, either in high school or college?

OSTRANDER: No, I did not. Are you trying to find something that sort of ties us all together?

Q: Yes, a very large number of you have edited papers. An astonishing number of you have. I wouldn't expect it to appear more than once or twice, but maybe 80 percent have, of the career women [ambassadors]. OSTRANDER: I was just thinking, a lot of my extracurricular activities were involved with language, and I was trying to think whether or not I put out something there. I think I did work on some of their little papers.

Q: We could give you a check in that column. [Laughter] I wonder if, at this point, before we leave Jamaica, you could talk a little bit about the difficulties of life overseas for a single woman, as opposed to a woman who is married.

OSTRANDER: I'm drawing a complete blank.

Q: There were no difficulties?

OSTRANDER: I thought the married women had the difficulties rather than the other direction.

Q: Now, why is that? Do tell me.

OSTRANDER: I don't know. It seemed to me that they were always at home and unable to work and unable to get out of the house, and they were always, it seemed to me, usually trying to sort of make-do. They would get together a lot with each other, and they always talked about how bored they were. And it seemed to me also, all of the difficulties of living overseas were sort of heightened because they had so much time to sit around and think about them. I'm sure that's changed, with time. But there were always teas. I don't know, it just seemed to me that they did an awful lot of gossiping with each other. I don't think that people who have full lives—now I'm not talking about everybody—but it just seemed to me that there was a lot of that. Whereas I had my interest in my work and touring around, in travelling around.

Q: And you had an abundant social life. All you wanted.

OSTRANDER: Oh, yes, exactly. Right. There were a lot of single women that did a lot of complaining about the social life, but it seemed to me that they were sitting around waiting for somebody to invite them places. I was always delighted when somebody did; I mean this was just absolutely marvelous. They were looking, I think, for glamorous invitations to the ambassador's when the prince was there, or some such thing as that. That isn't going to happen to very, very many people, if you're going to sit around and wait for that sort of thing, you're in trouble. I am sure that there are many posts where ambassadors and the high level in the embassies can do a lot more about including somebody other than the ambassador's secretary and the front office secretary, because they were usually included, and that can make for a lot of hard feelings. You know, “Why does she always get to go?”

Q: What about setting up your home and entertaining, yourself? Isn't that more difficult?

OSTRANDER: Oh, I'm sure it is. You don't have the time to do it. But I don't know, I've always had a pretty good reputation for the parties I gave. Mother always said everything's easy as long as you have enough people to delegate the work to. And I think that's probably always very good advice.

Q: Do you always get good servants, pretty much? Household help?

OSTRANDER: I had no household help in Cuba. I had a cleaning woman in the Hague, a cleaning woman in—I never went for that very much, really. When I say cleaning woman, I'm talking about somebody who came in every other—once a week maybe, or once every other week. But on parties, I usually had them catered. I just simply didn't give them until I could manage to pay for it.

Q: Do they have good caterers in Jamaica, for example?

OSTRANDER: Oh, marvelous caterers. Absolutely wonderful.

Q: That never would have occurred to me, to have things catered.

OSTRANDER: See? It probably is more difficult if the hostess—I like to have parties where I go to the party myself.

Q: And that way you could relax.

OSTRANDER: That's right. And I usually had a roommate somewhere, up till Jamaica, and we could share the expense.

Q: That's true. Two girls living together would make it very pleasant, I suppose.

OSTRANDER: Quite right. The difficulties about being single—

Q: You can't find any, can you?

OSTRANDER: Well, you have to be a good organizer, that is for sure. I must say that I used to sit around and laugh when new officers were moving into their residences, and their wives would call up and demand that they take two or three days off, and he would say, “She couldn't possibly do it by herself.” Or, “I wouldn't dream of asking her to do it by herself,” but of course I always did do it by myself. I must say I longed to have somebody that I could pick up the phone and say, “Come and help move the furniture.” But if you don't have that, you learn to cope.

It used to irritate me to death when I was expected to call on the wives of the officers who were above me in rank, because I thought something was radically wrong there. Some protocol officers used to demand it of you. So that you were actually doing both jobs. I got in some trouble in Jamaica for complaining that I just simply could not—in the mob scene I walked into in Jamaica—there was no way—of course I went to call on the ambassador's wife, and I went to call on the DCM's wife, but anybody else, I'm sorry, I will just have to meet them—

Q: The chief of section?

OSTRANDER: I was the chief of section. But there were officers above me on the protocol list.

Q: Of course, but that's ridiculous.

OSTRANDER: I think so too. And that was a difficulty. I must say, usually, the protocol officers were not difficult on that subject at all. Somebody would give a party, and you would meet the wives. I had nothing against the wives. I loved to meet the wives. They're people you want on your side, and you can make good friends, and I usually did make good friends. But sometimes they got a little sticky about the protocol of it, and were demanding that you do this, that, and the other—things that they never would have done if you'd been a man. Never. That's in the old days, and I don't know whether that still continues or not. Difficulties of being single.

Q: Well, what about things such as hanging pictures? Can you drive in nails? I can't.

OSTRANDER: Oh, of course. I'm very good at that. And then, what you want to do is, you go back to the office and say, “My walls are cement, what can I do?” And some man sneeringly says, “Haven't you ever heard of cement nails?” “No-o-o.” Picturing nails made out of cement. “No-o-o.” And then you go in and you buy them at the hardware store and find out that they're nails for cement. But all you have to do is come in, and some man is usually very happy to put you down and really sit you down and “You imbecile, let me tell you this.”

Q: But they don't come home and do it for you.

OSTRANDER: Oh, no, no, no, no. Very few. I have had several real good friends that I could call on. Drapes, I find particularly difficult. You just simply have to have somebody to help you. Of course, in the tropics you don't often have drapes. You know, you can usually find somebody. “Look, can you come and help me? And of course, in some of the bigger posts, the other female single people or male single people will be happy to help if you

offer a beer and a sandwich. It makes for fun, too. I never had the patience either, to wait for somebody to show up to move furniture. I always do it, and then for a week can't move because my back is killing me.

Q: But don't you think perhaps one thing is that it must cost you a lot more? Because, for example, if a wife is home, she can do the cooking, she has the time to make the draperies and so forth, where you have to buy everything. It must cost quite a bit more. You don't have the time to cut corners.

OSTRANDER: That's true. I should think it probably does, but I've got no way to compare. I suspect it does. I'll tell you, I've noticed it more probably in Washington than anywhere else, when I had jobs that required me to travel a lot. I noticed the men loved to go to these—they take you out to some state park or something where you all have a session, where you're isolated and you talk about this, that, and the other. And the men loved to have that sort of thing. I hate it, for the same reason that I noticed the men can pack up and leave in about fifteen minutes' notice to go overseas. I have to stop the paper, clean out the deep freeze or the refrigerator, go through all of this stuff, and I hate it. You know, it's more trouble than it's worth. Why don't we have our meeting downstairs somewhere? You know, if I didn't have to go through all of that and arrange with somebody to pick up the mail and arrange for all of this stuff, I too would think it was great just to dump all my responsibilities and walk.

Q: And the wives probably pack for them.

OSTRANDER: Oh, I'm sure. “Here it is, honey. Here's your suitcase all ready for you.” So I've noticed that—but isn't that funny that you should [feel sorry for the single people]—I always thought of it in the other direction.

Q: Well, it's delightful to know you have such a positive attitude. You're a great advertisement for women's liberation.

OSTRANDER: Well, I suppose so. I don't think I'm a Pollyanna. I have had posts that I would consider I was unhappier in than other posts. Usually it didn't have anything—it usually was something that was bothering me, personally, though. It was not the post per se. Because that post is going to be—it's going to have great things about it, and it's going to have bad things about it. Any way you look at it, life is like that.

Q: Were you ever homesick? Especially in Europe, where it's so gloomy so much of the year? That never was a problem?

OSTRANDER: I remember being homesick when I went away to camp when I was a kid. I don't ever remember being homesick since then, but my family was always so supportive and so interested in everything that I was doing that—I don't know: I think because I felt that support and I knew they were going to be there—

Q: You had a good base. A secure base.

OSTRANDER: I think that's it. It's the sort of a secure base that you reach out from. I suppose if you felt that that was in jeopardy at all—

Q: Did your mother ever come and stay with you at the posts?

OSTRANDER: Oh, yes. She came to visit me several times in Cuba of course, because she had family there, too. And let's see: she came I remember once in the Hague, and once in Antwerp, and she stayed with me about three months in Mexico. She died at the end of my Mexico City tour. I think she visited in just about every place.

Q: What about your sister?

OSTRANDER: She came to Cuba, but that's the only place.

Q: Her father, of course, was your uncle. But you did refer to her as your sister once, and I thought if you feel that close, I'd call her your sister.

OSTRANDER: That's right. Oh, definitely. She really likes me to call her my sister, although when we're only six months apart, people say, “What's this?” But I think that in this day and age, where families are really mixed up, it's probably getting less and less remarkable. Q: You talked the last time about learning from the Jamaican experience, and you stressed the importance of teamwork and praising other people to get them to work together. And then you also brought in something I found very interesting, and that was about Foreign Service nationals. Nobody else has dealt with that issue.

OSTRANDER: Oh, really?

Q: No. And how it's necessary to inspire them by being sure that there is a promotion chain.

OSTRANDER: There must be, if you're going to have a—now probably some of the others, if they're doing economic and political work and that sort of thing, they're not going to have a very big section, so they're not going to worry about that. And possibly also some of their locals may be advisors mainly, and so they're probably going to be rather high level. But if you have a big section, and I'm sure that administrative officers will know this too, you had better set up some sort of chain within your—what do you call that, a career development pattern that goes up the scale—in your own area, or you're just going to lose them all. The minute they get trained, they're going to—at the lower levels, they're going to move right out the door into some other area.

And that of course, also makes for very good morale. Any employee who comes into any sort of firm or business or whatever is going to look around and see if there's about a thirty-year career there. Otherwise, he's going to be looking for someplace that is going to offer him that.

Q: Did you see much in your career of the local people, who are the backbone, really, of the service, because they're the—

OSTRANDER: Continuity.

Q: The continuity. Did you see much of slighting treatment of them in the post by foreign service officers? Or ignoring them, maybe?

OSTRANDER: Oh, yes. But you know, come to think of it, if you're going to mention that, I have noticed that the foreign service officer of today, new ones coming in, don't have any idea how to treat secretarial or clerical or local help. I've talked to an FSI [Foreign Service Institute] class about it. I thought maybe they ought to have something over there that says, “Look, these are human beings. Don't worry, as the military might, as to whether or not they're a noncom rank. Don't worry about that at all. Treat them as you would a human being.” I see that in the Department of State. A lot of times the secretarial help is being treated as machines. You know: “Here's something—get it out by the end of the day.” Not everywhere, but you do see a lot of that.

Q: But that's curious, that nowadays, where everybody is so much less formal—

OSTRANDER: It's because they don't know how to do it. They just simply don't know what's expected of them. I suppose if you become a diplomat, once they hand you that commission, you really believe that you are a cut above or something.

Q: I thought some of that snobbism was breaking down now.

OSTRANDER: Well, I haven't served overseas since—I think so. I think it is very interesting.

Q: But in your beginning days, did you not find that the secretaries were included in all the parties and things?

OSTRANDER: Okay. In my beginning days—let's start in 1947. The Foreign Service Act of 1946. Before that, diplomatic and consular people did not speak to each other. So I was getting in on the tail end of that and found that many of my contemporaries and the same grade—I won't say rank because they didn't consider it rank at that time—starting in at that low level—a lot of people still left over on the diplomatic side just simply would not speak to those on the consular side, and their secretaries followed that pattern too. American citizens all.

I don't know. I've never had trouble with locals. I've always liked them so much. And mingled with them so much—they were the ones that had the most to teach me. And also I can always sympathize with them, because after all I started out lower level than a lot of them. I always felt that you're just about as capable as your lowliest file clerk, because if they're not feeding the information to you, there's nothing you can do with it.

And I think also—and I don't know if this was ever taught to me—but somewhere in the world I learned that my job—no matter what the performance requirement or the work requirement said—my job was to make my boss look good. I think that probably goes straight up to the Secretary of State and all the way through, and that doesn't mean you're—well, I think you understand perfectly well what that means: that you are to enable your boss to do the job that he was put there to do. I think a lot of the locals understand that. If you'll let them, they'll make it possible.

Q: Don't you find that they're almost pathetically grateful if you treat them like human beings?

OSTRANDER: The loyalty that it engenders is absolutely incredible. I think there's always a knack, however, to doing that, yet maintaining enough respect so that they're not taking advantage of you. I don't know how good I ever was at that. But I've also noticed that probably the human beings I've worked for that I've thought were most capable and most

worthy of my respect, were the ones who treated me as if I were a human being, and who gave me respect. So I think it works both ways.

Q: But you would agree that there was a terrific amount of snobbishness in the Foreign Service?

OSTRANDER: Oh, good heavens, yes.

Q: When did you begin to see that breaking down a little bit? I presume you did because you said—

OSTRANDER: Well, since I never knew—I entered the Foreign Service after 1946. I never really saw it at its height. And I never really dwelt on it a lot, but I do remember in the Hague, the day the telegram came through that said that I was now commissioned, was going to be an officer, I could almost tell you the names of the officers who came around and for the first time, treated me as if I were one of them, and who suddenly were treating me with a lot of respect and not standing at the door and yelling at me.

And I have never quite forgiven those people. Because it never occurred to me—you know, they can yell at me if they want to. If I'm not doing my job right, why perhaps they have the right to yell at me, although I'd prefer for them not to. But suddenly to see this turnaround, it was an absolute eye-opener for me, because it never had occurred to me that the reason they were yelling at me before was because of any lack of respect because of my grade. Suddenly, it was very apparent that that's exactly what it was.

Q: Well, then possibly you wouldn't be in the position to tell whether or not this had been ameliorated because you yourself were an officer, so you wouldn't be treated with that same kind of lack of respect.

OSTRANDER: That's right. That's true. So maybe it is still there. Of course, we don't have the FSS's like we did. But the secretaries I'll bet still feel it, when they're overseas,

although I don't know. I don't know. We only had one in Suriname, of course, and I just treated everybody in Suriname as—you know, if I was going to demand somebody of equal rank to talk to, I sure would be silent. Before that I was in Jamaica, and I think that pretty well covered how things were there.

Q: Were there any other points that you'd like to cover before we leave it, anything that you learned from it that was very useful when you yourself became an ambassador? Other than the ability to organize, which, of course, you knew you had. And of course you got an award out of that post, which is always helpful.

OSTRANDER: Yes. Which brought me a promotion. I don't think I would have been promoted, and I probably would have been out for time-in-class very soon thereafter if I hadn't gotten that award. But you know, the new officers coming in—and the personnel people tell them that one of the things they want to do is to get a small post because they will have an opportunity of getting into all kinds of work and doing all kinds of work—I would offer this to them: I have learned so much more at large posts where I was able to observe ambassadors with a great deal of experience, and a lot of other officers above me, notice what problems they were presented with, and see how they handled them. I learned so much more from watching somebody handle it than I did from being thrown into something that I hadn't a clue what to do about, and the trial-and-error method. If it was an error, you heard about it soon enough; if it was passable—that is you assumed it was passable if it didn't hit the fan. I just would caution somebody coming in now, don't turn down these large posts. Surely it's good to move from large consulate-general to small embassy to large embassy to small consulate, and this sort of thing. Get the whole spectrum—go to everything.

I think if I were to do it over again, although I loved the small posts, I think I probably learned a lot more about management and even how not to do things, by looking at an awful lot of people and seeing how they worked. And it came back to me when I was ambassador: “Oh, yes, this is the sort of thing that I saw Tony Freeman sweating out in

Mexico City on a much larger scale," and then I would remember what he had done. And as a matter of fact, there is a book called This Worked for Me, which is just that sort of thing, and it's very useful. That's the sort of thing we get at a large post that you might not get at a small post. You get the nitty-gritty at the small posts, but when you're ambassador that nitty-gritty isn't what you need. You're not going to be sitting down and working out the ledgers on the appropriations and that sort of thing, but you are going to have to manage the budget.

Q: Well, now you came back—

OSTRANDER: To the Visa Office. Now I had asked for that. I had decided, "Now look, it looks very much as if consular work is what they have in mind for me, and I have never worked on the consular side in Washington. You'd better go to it." I had met Barbara Watson, whose family background was Jamaican, and she had come to Jamaica, and I had made a point of being the escort officer, and talked to her about it and told her what I had in mind; that I didn't really know, I supposed visas is what I was most aware of, and I really would want to come back and do something in consular work in Washington.

So when it came time to be reassigned, she had passed the word along, and I was assigned to be the deputy to the chief of the Field Operations Division in the Visa Office. This was really dullsville.

Q: Who was this particular person? Chief of Field Operations?

OSTRANDER: Who was the chief? Joe Livornese. Nothing wrong with him. It's just that the job was not that much. If there was an inspection team going out, I wrote all those reports on what the visa problems were there. Got into security problems at visa posts, and anything that had to do with procedures, trying to untangle any sort of mess that came along. Did a lot of liaison with the INS. But I really didn't have much authority, and there really wasn't all that much to do. Joe was about to move on though, and it seemed to me that what they had in mind was for me to understudy him and move into that position. So I

did this, and that's just exactly what did happen. That was good experience, and I got up to that level, and also then I had a sort of deputy, who had moved in here, and I tried to give him a lot more than I had, because of the idea of his moving into that position.

The staff had increased also, and we were then beginning to handle visa fraud, and trying to come up with any sort of thing that we could do that would try to outguess those who were overseas trying to counterfeit visas.

Any rule that you come up with, they can come up with some sort of counterfeit. They just wait for you to come up with a rule so that they can find a way around it. So you begin to wonder, maybe we just shouldn't have any rules, then they wouldn't have any way to get around—but we came up with counterfoil stamps and did a lot of work with the Bureau of Engraving to come up with things that couldn't be counterfeited.

That was just the beginning of all the procedures that are now built into the visa issuance system that, hopefully, avoids all kinds of tampering. We had to make a complete study to try and categorize what kinds of tampering there was, whether it was changing a passport, or unsewing the visa pages and putting them in another place, changing photographs. Trying to outdo that. I enjoyed those. I think I was only one year in that position as chief.

During this time, the Women's Liberation Movement was coming into its own, and the rules and regulations were changing, and the State Department was really trying to do something for women. I can remember coming back and being absolutely astounded to see women wearing pants to work. No objection to it, but I had grown up in this sort of dress code in the Department of State, and I was really very intrigued. Right on! If that's what they wanted to do, fine. But it was sort of a symbol at that time; I don't think it any longer is. As a matter of fact, you probably see a lot more skirts these days in the State Department than slacks.

Q: I was noticing that. Very few slacks.

OSTRANDER: Only it seems to me at the clerical level and the secretarial level, you see it a lot more than you do at the officer level, and I kind of speculate in my own mind, are we trying to be more feminine? Whereas in 1970, we were trying to show a little more—I don't know what the psychological thing is there.

Anyway, I went to a few of the meetings.

Q: These are the ones that Mary Olmsted was connected with?

OSTRANDER: She certainly was. And I didn't really get too involved in it. The reason I'm bringing it up here is to point out that the powers-that-were decided at this time that women should be selected, even if only a token, to go to the War Colleges. They also were trying to get consular people going to the War College—I used to want to apologize for not being a black and Puerto Rican woman because that would count two extra ways. Anyway, I was selected to go to the War College, and I'm sure that's the reason I was selected.

Gladys Rogers, who was our first Coordinator for Women's Affairs—or whatever her title was, called me one day and asked me to come over. She wanted to meet me and interview me, and I could tell by her eyes that she felt that she had found somebody whose name she might put forward that people wouldn't moan and groan about. I think I probably owe my War College to Gladys, and a recommendation from her office.

Q: This was the first time women had gone to the War College?

OSTRANDER: No, it wasn't. I know that Nancy Rawls, my good friend Nancy Rawls had gone before me, and a couple of others. But it wasn't every year that one went, and this year they decided they would send five women: one State Department civil servant, one State Department Foreign Service Officer, one from CIA, one from the Air Force, and one from the Navy. So we were five over there, and it was very amusing to me, because the hierarchy kept calling us in at least every six weeks or so to ask us if everything was

all right, and were the rest rooms all right, and how about the shower equipment for the places where we were supposed to be doing all our military fitness programs? We each had to follow some sort of fitness program. I decided that I was not the type to be out there jogging. I did mine at home. But I did it.

Q: You didn't jog around Fort McNair?

OSTRANDER: No, but several of them did, you know. And I used to hear the remarks, too—one of the reasons I didn't want to do it. But I loved the War College. I really did. I was terribly shy though, and reticent.

Q: Over there at the War College?

OSTRANDER: Yes, I was. I really had been brought up with this idea of “Do your thing but don't call a lot of attention to it, because you don't really have to be aggressive. You can accomplish the same thing, probably do a better job if you're less aggressive.” The next thing they know it's done, and they don't know how it happened, but it's done. And there I was. I don't think I ever asked a question. You know they want you to ask all these questions. I don't think in the general—where the whole group was there together—that I ever put up my hand and asked a question.

Q: Did any of the women?

OSTRANDER: Yes, the military ones in particular did. Now, you see, my whole idea was, if you're talking, you're not really learning; it's in the listening. I would be willing to bet that I got a lot more out of that War College than a lot of other people who asked a lot of questions. But they were making points like crazy.

Q: They like to draw attention to themselves.

OSTRANDER: Precisely. But I analyzed, when I first went there, why is it I'm here? What is it they have in mind for me? And I decided what the State Department wanted was

somebody who was preparing herself to be consul-general. Maybe I was wonderful while I was at the War College, but I figured the day I graduated I'd go right back to being a consular officer, which wasn't and isn't yet so highly regarded by the Department of State as it should be. And that they probably were training me to be a consul-general in probably a large consulate general in Latin America. So I would take advantage of that year to fill in whatever gaps there were that would make me quite acceptable in that role.

We had quite a choice that we could make. You could sign up for a master's degree with George Washington University, and that probably would have looked good on my record. You could write a thesis; you could research on your own a specific subject, and then they would come in and listen to you give an exposition on what you had learned and what you had written. Or you could do five elective courses, and I chose that. The elective courses I chose were international law, economics, Latin American Studies, Aid to Developing Countries, and I think the other one was something to do with social issues at home.

Q: Which would be civil rights and women's liberation?

OSTRANDER: That's right. That sort of thing. That were important at the time.

Q: Where did you take the courses?

OSTRANDER: At the college. They offered them three afternoons a week. Economics was terrifying to me. It was taught by a professor from the CIA who was an expert in, I think, Chinese economy. The men who signed up for this course all were economists, and of course it was a snap for them, and that's the reason they signed up for it. Most of them were pilots and knew calculus, and that whole course was done in calculus, which I did not have a clue about.

I learned from that what a deprived child must learn when he suddenly goes to school and is absolutely out of it. It was absolute panic when I had to go back into that class. If the guy ever came near to looking at me, I would just go to pieces. We read Samuelson. We

did it in three weeks and were expected to comprehend it. Of course, all those guys knew Samuelson before they ever went in there. Anyway, I got through it, and as a matter of fact, I came out learning quite a bit about economics, because of, I think, just sheer fear.

Q: It must have blighted your year to a certain extent.

OSTRANDER: Well, it was only, of course, one of the courses, and it was three weeks or four, whatever it was. You go every Monday, Wednesday, and Friday for four weeks, and then you move on to something else. I was real glad to get rid of that one.

We traveled at the end of that year, to someplace in the world, and I chose Latin America. People said, “You're silly. You should have gone to some area that you don't know anything about.” Well, I had never been further south than Mexico City, so I figured that this was the right thing to do, and I'm glad I did. It was a very good trip.

Q: How many in the course all together, Nancy?

OSTRANDER: That went to Latin America, or you mean in the—

Q: Well, both. How many went with you, and then how many were there altogether?

OSTRANDER: I think there were fourteen from each of the services and—I'm trying to think, maybe 200 or so? Because you also had fourteen from some of the other agencies. You had some from the National Security Agency, from the CIA, from the Coast Guard, from Commerce, from Agriculture, from all of the agencies.

Q: And on the trip, what proportion?

OSTRANDER: It would have been around—maybe twenty of us. I may be really far off on that. It's been a while back.

Q: Well, how was the trip?

OSTRANDER: Oh, it was wonderful, marvelous trip. We went to Mexico City; to Panama; to Quito; Guayaquil; Santiago, Chile; Buenos Aires; Asuncion; Rio; Brasilia; Manaus; and back to Cura#ao.

Q: My goodness, how long did this last?

OSTRANDER: Three weeks, maybe. Three week trip. Since a lot of them were military governments, at that time, and I was with a military group, it was very interesting.

Q: I see you also had the Senior Seminar later, which is unusual.

OSTRANDER: I did, I did. I think they just don't know what do with you when you get up to a certain level. [Laughter]. But maybe that's wrong. They also want women in the Senior Seminar.

When I look back on that wonderful year at the War College, I try to analyze what it is I learned, and that is that I do have something to offer. I couldn't imagine, when I went over there, that a woman consular officer would have anything to add, and I did learn that I certainly did. There were times when I was right, and everybody else was wrong.

Also I think what it taught me was that a woman in this man's world has plenty to offer, because together you make a whole, you know. There's just no doubt about it that men will overlook a lot of the things that are first nature for you to think about, and they will also think of things that never would occur to you. So it just is, I think absolutely reasonable that you need both sides of this. I learned that, and also to value, to understand that I did have something to offer that simply wasn't going to be there unless I spoke up. And that certainly broadened my perspective 100 percent.

Q: It made you feel good.

OSTRANDER: Exactly. Any limitations that I might have felt, suddenly fell away, and I realized that if the correct political situation presented itself, there was absolutely no reason in this world that I couldn't go to the top. I don't think I realized that before. That didn't mean that I was going to go out there and buck for it. It just meant that, if the opportunity did present itself in the fullness of time, I wouldn't hesitate. Not only that I could do it, but that I had something to offer it. That they would be quite right in asking me to do the job.

One of the things that personnel has always said is, if you're chosen to go to the War College, you're really going to get a marvelous assignment after that. The day came that we graduated, and not a one of us from the State Department had an assignment. Not a one of us. This was sort of an off-year; out of sight, out of mind. So there we all were, coming over to talk to people.

There was the job at the Board of Examiners, running the consular portion of that, so I went over to interview for that. Actually, it was only a year's job, and there wasn't really anything else around, and it kind of interested me. I was not really all that eager to go right back into consular work again.

Q: This was the Bureau of Personnel Appointments? Consular Officer program Board of Examiners?

OSTRANDER: That's right. That was really giving the oral exam, at that time we had a threshold exam, and we did a lot of other kinds of exams.

Q: You must have had a whole different view of things, watching the young ones coming in and seeing what they were like.

OSTRANDER: It was very interesting. I would suggest that everybody ought to do it. As a matter of fact, the State Department should send its very best officers over to select the next generation. This is what I found in it, and what I think anybody who's ever done this

job has felt like. This has got to be one of the most important things I ever did, because I have picked a whole new generation. The reason they shouldn't have people doing it more than one year [is] because you are apt to pick a certain type. It was a good year.

Q: But that's a job that most people don't want because it doesn't push your career.

OSTRANDER: Oh, no, absolutely. It is a year out of your career. There are lots of reasons you should want the job, [if for example], a job you want won't open up for a year. But usually they put people over there because they can't find anything else for them to do.

Anyway, during that year I went to give the Foreign Service officer oral exam. I had five weeks in San Francisco, three weeks in Chicago, three weeks in Dallas, and three weeks in Atlanta and a six weeks' tour of the Far East. That was certainly well worth it! And I learned a great deal about young people coming into the Foreign Service.

I also was selected to run the program—at that time we had decided that any woman who had given up her commission only because she wanted to get married, could, up to a certain deadline, reapply, and we would take her back in, and see if we couldn't give her a commission at a higher level, if she could show that whatever she was doing in the meantime was [professionally enhancing] I ran that program, and I feel that I am personally responsible for bringing back some pretty good women into the Foreign Service. Jane Abell [Coon] was one of them. I could name quite a few others.

Q: So Jane Coon came back in then. That would be between '73 and '74.

OSTRANDER: Yes.

Q: I think that notice was sent out around '73, wasn't it? “Come on back, girls.”

OSTRANDER: I think about that time. Right.

Q: Well now, what did you have to do?

OSTRANDER: Look over their records; there were an awful lot of things going at that time. You had to get certificates of need from personnel. In other words, it would be very difficult to bring somebody back in at a very high level in the political cone because there were too many officers already; this sort of thing. So it was a lot of red-tape, besides reading all the old files, getting all the old files out, and then trying to put some sort of evaluation on the work that they had been doing in the meantime outside.

A lot of them had not been employed outside but had still done plenty of things. Volunteer things. Even if they were only overseas with their husbands, some of the work they did at the post was really equivalent, and really they had a lot to offer. I didn't actually have to haggle about salaries, but I did read the file and decide whether or not we should bring them back in at one, or maybe two, or sometimes even higher level. Some of them went back to school and got law degrees, you know. Q: Did any come back in at the same level as when they left?

OSTRANDER: I don't recall that they did, but I'm not sure. I wouldn't be able to say that either way. Some of them hadn't been gone that long, you know. And there were secretaries also.

Q: You had to do them, too?

OSTRANDER: As I recall, I did do some of those. I may be wrong. Maybe I just read the files. Maybe they just asked for my opinion, because we did an awful lot of work over there that was sort of passing things around and getting a lot of different views. And then of course I did run the consular [cone] and had the really last word on those applicants, as the person who runs the consular—or whatever cone it is over there now, still does. After all the testing is done, somebody has to sit down and say this person—this is the overall score that I think they should get in, or this person is simply not suitable. Not so much that they're not suitable, but that there are many, many other candidates that are more suitable.

Q: Tell me, if you had two women to come into the consular cone, and you had a wife returning or you had a new one, how would you pick?

OSTRANDER: We wouldn't really have to. I don't think they were competing with each other at all. In the first place, the ones who were coming back in were at upper levels, and the others would be at the entry levels, so you had two different systems.

Q: Did you turn down any of the wives?

OSTRANDER: Yes, I think I did. Because some were really demanding—I said we just simply cannot offer at that high a level. We would make them an offer, and if they just didn't find that acceptable—

Q: You had to make the offer based on the needs of the Service, I suppose.

OSTRANDER: Oh, yes. Quite right, quite right.

Q: I'm sure it cost them to stay out, in most cases, didn't it?

OSTRANDER: I can't say that it did. I can't say that it did.

Q: I know some who shot right up, such as Jane Coon, Elinor Constable, but others perhaps feel that that's why they aren't where they should be?

OSTRANDER: I had a feeling that quite a few of the files I was reading were really just putting us to the test, and that when the offer was made they didn't choose to take it. I think I would have done the same thing.

Q: But you feel then, that having to stay out did not affect their careers negatively in the long run, as a general rule.

OSTRANDER: As a general rule,—anything that I did tried to make up for anything that—but you're talking in hypotheticals there. Some of them might have even come out a little better. Who knows?

Q: Oh, I think some definitely did. I have heard some grumbling, this is why I'm asking you this. Because I have talked to some of these women, and some of them have done extraordinarily well. I mean just leaped from one grade to the next. But others haven't, and they blame it on the fact that they stayed out. Now my question is, would it have happened to them anyway?

OSTRANDER: It's quite possible. They might have even—

Q: They weren't offered as much to come back in as Suzy down the street was.

OSTRANDER: I see. Well, maybe what they were doing was not—

Q: Maybe they didn't have as much to offer?

OSTRANDER: As I say, I saw several of them who had gone back to school and gotten law degrees, and others that had worked at their law firms, and taken immigration cases, for instance. But also, in a year's time, I was certainly not able to see them all. Those cases move very slowly, and so some of them I'm not sure exactly what was finally offered to them.

Okay. My year was coming to a screeching halt over there, and I kept coming over here to personnel to see what they had, and they just didn't offer anything. I was now senior rank. Chris Squire was my personnel officer, and I finally said, “Look, I see that you're about to have a vacancy at my level, in career development for mid-level consular officers. I was pretty good at placement back in the old days, so I'm happy to step into that job, because I don't see that you've got anything else to offer.”

Well, he was delighted, because not too many people wanted those jobs. I loved placement work. I didn't really think I was going to get promoted to the top level through that job, but still I felt like it's time to plug back into the personnel system and find out what in the world is going on here.

Q: I think PER is a good place to be. You see everything coming along.

OSTRANDER: Exactly. And you find out what the real story is, what your own chances are, and where you had better find a job for yourself in order to position yourself. So I went over and did that for a year, and I haven't got too much to offer on what was going on then. That's exactly what I did learn from it. Again, they were still looking for women, and I did try to take on as much there that would be helpful to the Service as I could think of, and write all the position papers that were needed up on the Hill when they were looking into what EEO [Office of Equal Employment Opportunity] was doing. I did try to take on all those papers, and M/DGP [Director General of the Foreign Service] was grateful for it.

After a year they asked me if I would move over to senior assignments, and so I did move over there. I thought it was a good move, not so much for myself, as thinking they needed a woman and a consular officer over there. Nobody else had a clue as to what the consular jobs are. So I did that, and of course by doing that, it didn't take me long to realize that I was in a position to see what might be coming down the pike for myself.

I was at that time, however, really looking at the big consular jobs, and of course, those big consular jobs are London, Paris, Rome. I was still thinking in terms of that. Of course I had to do all the work, and all the biographic, and writing up all the cables and everything, for all the presidential appointment jobs that were in my areas. And I had all of ARA and all of AF and then many bureaus of the Department. So I learned how that system worked. I was also there at the time of the Carter change, and saw how that selection system worked.

I was sitting on panel one day when the first ambassador to the new country of Suriname was selected, and realized while I was sitting there, by gosh, this is one that I would qualify for. There aren't many around, but this is one that I could very well hold my head up and proudly say, “There is no way you can tell me I don't qualify for this one, because I'm probably better qualified that anybody else, and if the job ever comes open while I'm around, I am just going to throw my own hat into this ring.”

Q: Mary did the same thing, you know, for her job. Mary Olmsted. That's how she got Papua New Guinea. She was working in PER, and she threw her name in.

OSTRANDER: And that's just exactly what I did. It was very apparent to me that what they were looking for at the time was somebody with a career both in the Caribbean and in the Netherlands, and if you had punched that in a computer, I think only one name would have ever come up, and mine was it. They were also needing to do something for consular officers, and getting pressure for that in the DG's office. They were getting pressure for women appointees. I drew up the list and wrote it up, and added my own name and justified it.

I don't know what happened. Irv Cheslaw was my boss, and I'm sure he had to talk long and hard when he went up to Harry Barnes. But if the truth were known, I think probably what happened was that everybody else on that list had—you know, these lists have to go through everything before they ever get out of this building even, and then over to the White House. I think that everybody else on that list had somebody in one of these offices that really did not want to see that person on the list.

So when it came right down to it, here's this unknown quantity here who is obviously qualified, and the White House is looking—it would just solve a lot of problems. And besides, what harm can you do in a place called Suriname that nobody's ever heard of? Now I don't mean to downgrade this, but I wasn't asking for Moscow, you know, or Paris or London. Anyway, it worked.

Q: So tell me how you first heard that you got it.

OSTRANDER: Irv Cheslaw came back from upstairs, from a meeting at the director general's office, and said, “If there's some way we can put on there that you know Dutch, he's willing to go along with it.”

Q: This is Harry Barnes?

OSTRANDER: Yes, Harry Barnes. I said, “Well, you can certainly put down there that I read it, and that I think that there would be no difficulty in my taking a few lessons, but certainly with seven years between Holland and the Flemish section of Belgium, I probably know more Dutch than most people in the Foreign Service, although I've never taken a test in it.”

Anyway, that was along about Christmas. He said, “I think it's going to go.” But then, it must have been March or so, that they told me my name had gone to the White House. Then they came around and gave me all the forms to fill out, but of course it was still hush-hush.

Then finally the White House announced it. As a matter of fact, I was out in Indiana at the time, and they phoned me to say that it had been announced by the White House, but it still wasn't through the Senate. Then agr#ment had been requested.

Q: Who called you when you were in Indiana?

OSTRANDER: Certainly not the president. He [Reagan] does now, he's the only president who ever has, to my knowledge. I suppose Jefferson didn't have a phone. [Laughter] Oh, I think it was just somebody in senior assignments. I don't think it was any higher than that. No, now he [Reagan] does, and I have to congratulate him on this.

Q: I'm surprised that Jimmy Carter with his populism didn't.

OSTRANDER: They didn't even give you a photograph of yourself with the president, you know. And of course, you lose all credibility if you get to some of these small countries where they think that the president gets up every morning thinking of Suriname, New Guinea, or a place like that. It's very hard for them to understand that that isn't the case.

It was even suggested to me that I make some pretense to get into the White House or maybe one of these ceremonies, and then walk up and grab the president by the hand and shake it, and have somebody take a picture of me. I am not about to do such a thing. As a matter of fact, you'd probably get shot, as far as security goes.

Q: Now Reagan sends his people out with pictures of himself.

OSTRANDER: I got this one by working over there at the White House and just asking for them to do it for me. Which they did, and I'm sure it's signed by machine. It's that one [photograph] over there in the corner.

But I did get up to the U.N. You saw my picture with Andrew Young. That did stand me in good stead. Andrew Young had been to Suriname and loved it, and they loved him, and so it was a very valuable picture. And they all knew Terry Todman, too, who was assistant secretary for ARA [Bureau of Inter-American Affairs], and I had my picture with him. So that helped.

But it would have been extraordinarily [useful]. I don't think they understand how important it is. I think most other countries do it. The chief of state gives you five minutes.

Q: You're his personal representative.

OSTRANDER: Exactly. If I had ten minutes with the president, this is what I would tell him: “For heavens' sakes, do that, no matter who it is and no matter where they're going, do it, because it establishes their credibility.”

Q: Before we get to Suriname, I want to know all about the hearing before the Senate, and how you prepared.

OSTRANDER: Oh, yes. Well, I was pretty terrified. And yet, I'd noticed in preparing all the other people that one of the things the Senate always did was to ask you about the job you had been in, to get you under oath and press you for answers that they were unable to [obtain by other means]. I knew that I was safe in that; they weren't going to ask me about senior assignments.

I went to H [Bureau of Legislative Affairs]. I can't remember that woman's name, but she gave me a briefing that was absolutely superb. She had a chart, and she showed me where everybody on the Foreign Relations Committee would be sitting, and she briefed me on each one of them and told me what sort of questions that I could expect from each one of them. It was wonderful. She was right; in every case she was right. Oh, my, was that briefing worthwhile.

Of course, my newspapers at home had gone pretty crazy with this, and my senator, Senator [Richard] Lugar, who is now head of that committee, telephoned me and said he wanted to appear with me—he wasn't on the committee at the time. He was a reasonably new senator, and he wanted to go over with me.

I wasn't particularly pleased with that idea, because it looked like I was a political appointee. It's only the political appointees who show up with [their senators]. But his staff made it very clear. Now, Senator Lugar's stepfather was my father's old business partner, and so I knew his mother rather well. I suspect his mother called him up and said, “Get to it.” anyway, they said the senator really wanted to do this, so I said, “Fine.”

I rode up to the hill that morning with Dick Murphy, who was going to the Philippines, and Terry Todman, who was becoming assistant secretary in ARA. And the gentleman who was former governor of Maine [Kenneth Curtis]. He was going to be considered for the

Canadian-American border commission, and he later became ambassador to Canada. Oh, I was very impressed with him too. These gentlemen were so very capable. So we got up there [and] they said they hoped I wouldn't mind, they would take all these other people ahead of me. As a matter of fact, it was wonderful, because they wore themselves out on poor Terry Todman. I've forgotten where he was coming from, but they asked him a million questions. This was '78. They really gave it to him on all of Latin America and everything else. Dick Murphy, the shrewdy, had been up on the Hill and gone around to all the key people and said, “I want to brief you personally on any questions you might have on the Philippines.” He went through very smoothly, but I hate to think of what would have happened if he hadn't done that, and I thought that was a really smart thing for him to do. Then the gentleman who was going to the border commission for Canada was questioned, and Senator Muskie came in to be with him.

Then Dick Lugar arrived and introduced me. And I remember that sitting in the chair was Senator McGovern, and I don't care what anybody says about Senator McGovern, that man was so nice to me. He said he had looked over my record and he wanted to compliment me on how far I had come, and he gave a long discourse on how wonderful consular officers are, and how unsung, and how unappreciated, and here was one; anyway, it was just a very, very nice introduction, and I was just relaxing like nobody's business, and it must have been very visible how relaxed he had made me feel, and I will always remember him for that. It was so kind of him.

The only question that I remember was, one of the senators asked me if it was true that the Dutch had traded Suriname for Manhattan, and I explained how that had worked. Actually, it was the British, because the British had traded Manhattan with the Dutch, and the way it had all worked out was that that was swapping.

And his next question was, “Do you think the Dutch got a good deal?” Well, of course, New York at the time was absolutely bankrupt, and I knew very well that Suriname was going to

be reading the hearings, and I said, “Well, I think if you will look, you will notice that in the end the Dutch lost both.” And so he let it go at that.

Q: It's a pretty dumb question to ask if you're going out to represent the U.S. to Suriname.

OSTRANDER: Exactly. Well, he couldn't think of anything else to ask. But I didn't have too many questions. They did ask me about the Bush Negroes; seemed to have the idea that that's all I was going to find there. And you know, this is one of the things that Surinamers are very sensitive about. They appreciate their Bush Negroes and understand how absolutely unique they are in today's world, but that's not all that is there. It is a country that has quite a few highly educated people, certainly more than just a group of people who are still sort of living in eighteenth century Africa. So, I had to sort of skirt those [questions]. [The senators] weren't speaking to a Suriname audience. They weren't hearing what it would sound like, and of course, that's exactly what I was hearing. It went through very smoothly. It was all put on videotape and shown at home. The local TV station was there.

In the middle of my hearing, the door opened, and a tour group came in, the loudest tour group I've ever heard. It was senior citizens, and all women, and they were so absolutely delighted that a woman was being considered for something that they kept shouting at each other, “What's she doing!” “Where's she going!” and this sort of thing. On the way out, they yelled at me, “Honey, what is it you got?” [Laughter]

This is the first experience I had with a sense of, you're doing something for all womankind. Of course, it also occurred to me that if you fail, all womankind fails. I think this is where we draw the difference. If a man succeeds or fails, it's on his own. Now I expect the blacks have this too, though. But if a woman succeeds or fails, it's all of womankind that falls flat on her face, or also rises to the top. I really felt a sisterhood that I had never felt before. They were absolutely rejoicing in my appointment, and it was doing

something for each and every one of them. I had never realized that before. I haven't really felt it so much since, so maybe we're getting used to it.

Also the folks back home. They were rejoicing—they were getting something out it for themselves, too. And it was really kind of exciting that it made so much joy for so many people.

Q: And of course Lugar got his face in the paper with you—and on the TV. Which didn't hurt him with the voters.

OSTRANDER: He's never had any trouble with the voters. Don't worry, he can run for anything he wants to in the state of Indiana and it's his.

Q: I'll bet that back home everybody thought that he had gotten you in.

OSTRANDER: Oh, I'm sure of it. I can remember, one gal that I'd gone to school with called me up and she said, “It's the only smart thing Carter ever did.” [Laughter]

Q: Not Carter country out there.

OSTRANDER: Not Democratic country out there, let me put it that way.

Q: And they tell you right then that you're in? It's not like the FSO exam where you have to wait for the results?

OSTRANDER: I did have to wait for the results; they would let me know in a day or two. Then I did get the word that my name had been reported out to the full Senate with a recommendation for approval.

Q: But you had a sense when you were there that you had passed?

OSTRANDER: I certainly didn't think that it was going to be controversial at all, since most of them didn't know where Suriname was. [Laughter] I told them about that, as a matter of

fact. I had been briefed by the desk, and I had been reading in, and they did want to know if I knew Dutch. And I had been studying and going over to the FSI eight hours, one-on-one, every day. Dutch.

Q: How long did you keep that up?

OSTRANDER: About four weeks. I don't think I'll ever speak Dutch. In the first place, I find it impossible to speak a foreign language to anybody who knows English, and I've never met a Dutch speaker who didn't. I certainly got so I could read it, I got so I could understand it, and if I ever did come up against somebody who absolutely knew nothing but Dutch, and many of the Hindustanis, the East Indian people, and some of the Javanese don't know English, I could certainly make myself understood. But reluctantly.

Q: You did a lot of preparation. What about this ambassador's course, did they have that yet, over at FSI?

OSTRANDER: We had a conference, an ambassador's conference, that lasted a week. It was a couple of days here, and then we went off to some CIA place and communed together for a couple of days. I remember in that course, Geri Joseph and I got to know each other. Although she didn't go off to the CIA place; she had other things she had to do. But we got to know each other. She was going to the Netherlands, and I was going to Suriname, so we had that in common. There was a fellow who was going to Denmark [Warren Manshel].

Also Spike Dubs [Ambassador Adolph Dubs, taken hostage in Afghanistan and assassinated February 1979] was in that group, going to Afghanistan, and we got to be quite friendly. I remember, he was so thrilled, and the last time I saw him, he was downstairs. He was getting on the FSI bus and had a suitcase, and he was going over to Virginia, and on to his post. I'm pleased that he was so delighted because that's the way I remember him: a big smile on his face, really excited.

Q: What did you think of Geri Joseph?

OSTRANDER: I liked her very much. I sat there next to her admiring her hundreds of dollars' worth of silk suits, and she was so right, looking so ambassadorial. She told me that she sat there looking at me and envying my thirty years or whatever it was [of experience and] knowing what I was doing. And I thought, oh, gosh, too bad that it can't be a combination of both somehow. But if I had as much money as Geri Joseph did and was in the Foreign Service, something would have had to have been very peculiar about my background if I made that much money out of it [government service]. I liked her very much, and when I was in the midst of that coup, she thought of me and after it was over, she wrote the nicest letter.

Q: We were speaking about security and the problems of terrorism.

OSTRANDER: Suriname had two routes to get to work, so that didn't provide much means of alternating, which is what security recommends—that you don't take the same route home all the time. And they also recommend that you vary your schedule, that you go in at different times, which also is not possible when you have a very, very small embassy and are doing as much of the substantive work as anybody, and you have to be there at the appropriate hours. In Suriname we worked from seven until three, straight through.

Q: Because of the heat?

OSTRANDER: Yes, because of the heat and because of the hours that everybody else worked. The Foreign Office worked only until noon, and then they worked also on Saturday. I was on call on Saturday, but I didn't usually go into the office. In such a small town, the office can come to you, if there's anything necessary.

That doesn't sound like too exhausting a schedule, but I can never remember an evening during the week and usually on Saturdays, too, that there wasn't a function that I had to attend. And you get as much done in those evening groups as you do any time.

Q: The minute you said seven to three, I thought, that's a long day, because then you have to go out at night.

OSTRANDER: Suriname slept at three o'clock in the afternoon until about six or seven. They stayed up very, very late into the night, because it's cool.

Q: Your training in Cuba was good for that, wasn't it?

OSTRANDER: But I can't anymore, that's all there is to it. I would go to the dinner parties. I'd still have to get up at five-thirty to get to work by seven. It was late every night, I must say.

Q: What about when you first arrived at the post. Could you discuss that? Did you stop anywhere on the way, first of all?

OSTRANDER: Yes. I took the Eastern flight to Trinidad and Tobago. You could go to Cura#ao and wait for the Antilles Airline plane, which was a subsidiary of KLM, the ALM line. Get that flight if you happened to coincide with it. But that got you into Suriname about two in the morning, and the airport there is sixty miles out of the city and really in the jungle. It's the airport that was built by the U.S. Air Force in the Second World War, because we ferried people and equipment through Suriname on the way to North Africa. It's a beautiful big airport, and it was built by us, and it's still a great one, but it's sixty miles south of Paramaribo, and there's no way that you can ask the Foreign Office to be out there at two o'clock in the morning to greet an ambassador.

So I went the other route, which was Eastern Airlines to Trinidad and Tobago. Richard Fox, who was ambassador at that time, kindly asked me to stay with him and his wife. I had known them here in Washington.

Trinidad and Tobago was infamous in not showing much courtesy in getting people through the airport, and I can still see both of us sitting out there on the tarmac, waiting: two U.S. ambassadors sitting there cooling their heels while people tried to get my baggage through customs and get me into the country. We waited a long time.

The next afternoon I took the Air France flight, which island-hops Martinique and on down to French Guiana, but makes a stop in Paramaribo. It isn't exactly what you imagine [as to how] of how you're going to arrive. It was packed full. People even in the rest rooms. There just weren't enough not enough seats and not enough flights. There still aren't, I'm sure.

Q: No first class, I suppose?

OSTRANDER: Oh, of course not. I can remember John Burke, who was Ambassador to Guyana at the time said, “Nancy, wouldn't you know that you and I would pick posts, when we finally could take first class, that had no first class.” [Laughter] It's true. I did get first class, though, all the way to Trinidad and Tobago on the Eastern flight. That's the only time I've ever had that privilege.

All of the Amazon countries were negotiating a treaty called the Amazon Pact. They had just finished the treaty, and it was being signed in Brasilia, and so all the foreign ministers and most of the Foreign Office had gone to Brasilia at the time I arrived. I was met by somebody from Protocol, and by my entire staff, at the airport. I didn't make them see me off, incidentally, because by that time I understood what it meant to get everybody down there. But I didn't know that at the time, so they were all there, and they met me at the airport. We had a drink and refreshments while they got my things through customs, and it was then night, and we took an interesting drive through the jungle to get back. It was

eight or nine at night, but, of course, the sun comes up at six and it goes down at six when you're on the equator, and Suriname is, I think, only four degrees north of the equator.

Through the jungle. To me it was very interesting, because having lived in the Netherlands, all the directional signs, the way the roads were, were set out—everything looks just exactly like the Netherlands, but you're going through the middle of the jungle. So it's really rather strange.

Then I got to the house. Nobody in it but me. Just nobody. In Suriname, you don't have servants at night; they go home. I was given the keys and just sort of turned loose, and that was the greatest disappointment of my life, that house.

Every wall, and I'm talking about even those in the same room, was painted a different color. I find this very distressing It bothers me. Let me give you a sample of one bedroom: There was an avocado rug, one lavender wall, one navy blue wall, one yellow wall, and one orange wall. There were two overstuffed chairs in it that had slipcovers on them, and they were pink. The bedspread was something [else]. I have never seen anything like that. I learned later that Surinamers love this—the more color the better, and it doesn't make any difference to them if it clashes.

But I certainly didn't get any sleep that night. I don't know why. I was so dead tired, to begin with, and realizing that I couldn't—you know, I wish they'd warned me. And I wish they had said something like, “Don't worry, we'll do anything you want, we'll paint it. We're just not doing anything until you get here and have a look at it.”

Well, the next day, when I went to the office for the first time, the poor administrative officer said, “Can we do anything for you?”

And I said, “Paint the house white!” I painted everything in it white, just because I couldn't stand all that. I'm very sensitive to color. I can't relax. I mean every room in that house—

every wall was a different color. So anyway, they did that, and boy, what a difference it made. Then I started moving furniture around.

Q: But what did you do about that avocado rug?

OSTRANDER: Well, I found out later, the hard way, that the ambassador who had been there before me, Owen Zurhellen, had ordered a lot of new furniture. It takes so long to get anything down to Suriname. Not just that many ships go, and nothing goes by plane, apparently, because they can't fit it in the hold. They can't get a plane in that's big enough.

After I'd been there about six months, I got this cable from FBO [Office of Foreign Buildings] which said that they regretted that all that furniture—which I hadn't even known had been ordered—had gone down in the Bermuda triangle in a shipwreck. And that I was really indeed fortunate, because everything on board the ship had been lost. If it's only damaged, you can't replace it. They can't reorder it, because there it is. There are all kinds of government claims, and it's a dead loss, and so you can't reorder until there is a settlement. I didn't realize the government doesn't insure anything anymore. They just don't lose enough, and the insurance is very expensive to be worthwhile.

But I was indeed fortunate that everything had gone down. They reordered the furniture, and I made do with what there was. The color scheme was really rather nice, but I did get rid of that avocado rug. One of the bedrooms had been used as a cold storage room, and I kept that up until some new furniture did arrive. At that time I tried to make arrangements for getting the food out of the bedrooms and into closets, because I don't know about you, but I just can't live like that. I want to open a door and not see that it's storage. I found the house absolutely unlivable, because the way it was built, the architect had put the supporting beams right in the middle of the—for instance, as you walked in the front door, you walked right into a supporting beam, and you had to walk around it. And when you opened closet doors, there they were. In the bedroom. And I'm talking about beams that are sort of y-shaped, so that you smashed your head on things. I found this impossible to

arrange the furniture. It was just impossible to live with, although you certainly learned to do so.

Q: What did you do for furniture since that new order of stuff went down?

OSTRANDER: Well, there was already furniture there. It was time to replace it, but you could make do. There was plenty of furniture. As a matter of fact, there was too much furniture and so stuff had been piled up in bedrooms. It was a four-bedroom house, and I would say that at least two of them were just jam-packed full of really bad furniture.

Q: Was this overstuffed furniture?

OSTRANDER: Some of it was. I fixed up a guest room that really, really looked nice, and I fixed up my own room, and then as stuff began to arrive—and toward the end of my tour a few things did arrive—I managed to get the other two bedrooms pretty nice-looking with furniture.

Q: What kind of furniture are you permitted to pick out? Do they give you catalogs and you select?

OSTRANDER: I never had that opportunity. FBO does that, and it was Henredon furniture, and I think a lot of surplus. As a matter of fact, you run into the same thing all over the world.

Q: Yes, you do; very heavy, sturdy furniture.

OSTRANDER: Very heavy. There wasn't much on the walls, and I did manage to get the Arts in the Embassies program. Did I tell you that story?

Q: No.

OSTRANDER: It was through a fluke that I got it. I started immediately to try, when I saw that there were no art institutes or art museums anywhere in Suriname. There was plenty of wall space, and it was all white by this time, and so it was really a great place for just that sort of thing.

After about six months of trying, I came back up to the department, and I went to see Ambassador Thompson's wife. She still runs it [the Arts Program], I think. I wasn't getting anywhere with it. I was really being stalled.

And I can understand why, because to send good art to a country like Suriname, where the humidity is incredible—but my point was this: you send it to Paris and London and Rome and Moscow, where they've got all the art you could possibly want. And yet here is a country that this is going to be the only opportunity for an awful lot of people to see anything in the way of good painting. And I thought it was criminal.

But anyway, I was sitting there, being turned down by Mrs. Thompson, and the phone rang, and she answered it, and I heard her say, “The ambassador isn't here, but his wife is.” And then the blood sort of drained out of her face, and she looked at me, and she said, “I do beg your pardon,” and handed me the phone. And when I hung up from that telephone conversation, she says, “You can have anything you want.”

Q: She thought you were being one of those testy wives.

OSTRANDER: Oh, yes. And she sent me—thirteen very large paintings. I don't know how they ever got them into a plane. But got them down there. Then all my artistic friends down there automatically came over to help me hang them, and they all had such good ideas, and it really looked great. The inspectors were there, I remember.

And that night—or very shortly thereafter—I held a grand opening. I gave something which in Suriname, in their tongue, would be called an opodoro, which is an open door, or an

open house. And invited everybody in the city, and even at that, people gate-crashed, because they wanted to see the paintings.

Q: Now could you remember any of the artists of these paintings that you selected?

OSTRANDER: I had two very large ones by the wife of our Ambassador to Haiti—

Q: Oh, Sheila Isham. Hers are very good.

OSTRANDER: Yes, they looked very nice there. Oh, and I can't remember the others.

Q: But in the modern vein, with a lot of color.

OSTRANDER: Very modern, a lot of color.

Q: No representational work?

OSTRANDER: No. One that was sort of an impression of New York City, of a big city that had postmen on bicycles, and a little bit of Wall Street was really very entertaining to look at.

Anyway, that night even the president of Suriname came, and the TV station showed up to do a live on-the-scene thing, and I must say that those paintings looked better on TV than they actually did just looking at them.

And they're still there, I think. And since they're still there, I would recommend others do this, and that Mrs. Thompson's group down there in Arts in Embassies not worry too much about humidity. There is nothing more humid than Suriname. I did have air-conditioning in the house.

Q: Is this a masonry house? A stucco house?

OSTRANDER: It was wood, and you reminded me of a story. I kept hearing things at night, and then one day I got up, and I looked at the wall in back of my bed, and it looked funny. I went over and touched it, and the only thing that was there was the layer of paint. Can you believe it? I don't know, but something ate it. Something ate that whole wall and left nothing but the layer of paint. All of Suriname, in those days, built things of wood. Everything looked exactly the way it did three hundred years ago, because they'd replace it one plank at a time, you know.

Q: So did you see a lot of wood from the outside of the house? Is it like Tudor with the wood beams going up and then the stucco in the middle?

OSTRANDER: It was cement block, is what it was, except that is, in the front. The ground floor was cement block, and then the upper part was wood with paint on it. Except for the part that's brick. Most of the center of Suriname looks like Williamsburg. It's exactly the same period. It's Dutch and it's brick; it's beautiful. It's colonial, let's put it that way.

Q: Was yours built in that style?

OSTRANDER: No, not at all. It was modern. It was a pretty good house for Suriname. I would say they're not really well-known for their architects, their modern architects. Which always struck me as rather funny, because look at Brazil, which is right next door. Fantastic architects they have there, and architecture. Using the modern with old-time styles, and bringing the outdoors in, and it's just so attractive. Not so very much in Suriname. It's the old part of town and downtown that is colonial, Dutch colonial I loved it. Oh, it's marvelous. They don't paint it very much. They do paint it, but then the paint goes so quickly.

I remember the Dutch ambassador, when I first arrived said, “They tell me that as soon as you look at these buildings, which look like they need a good coat of paint, and find them beautiful, you've been here too long.” Well, it took me about two weeks to find them

beautiful. [Laughter] I just loved them. There was something about that weathered wood. Everybody who got off the plane would look at it and say, “Why don't they paint it?” And I would look at it and think, “It's nice when they paint it, because it's beautiful all white, but somehow or other there's just something about that weathered wood that I really like.”

The whole place is—if the Rockefellers would see it, they'd rebuild the whole city. Well, most of it's rebuilt, but on all the side streets you would see leftovers from the seventeenth century in places. Old brick lying around like nobody's business.

Q: I suppose that was the jewel in the Dutch crown, wasn't it?

OSTRANDER: One of them. Remember there was Indonesia. But it still is the second largest Dutch embassy in the Western hemisphere. Next to Washington, the largest Dutch Embassy is in Paramaribo. Now they had an architect go down there and build them a new embassy. It was a very modern building, looked very Dutch, and yet they had incorporated into it all the reminiscences of the old Dutch colonial. Oh, great, really.

Q: Well, you were talking about the first night there, and how it was the worst night of your life because you had all these dreadful colors and everything. Did you think, “This is just too much for me? I can't take this?”

OSTRANDER: Well, I cried all night, that's for sure.

Q: Because this was the culmination of your career!

OSTRANDER: Of course! And as I looked at it, I thought, “I can't live in it! And there isn't anybody here, and I don't even know where the john is. I don't even know where the kitchen is.”

Q: To be left all alone like that!

OSTRANDER: It wasn't what I had expected at all. The next day, when the admin officer said we'll paint it any color you want, I felt better. But I thought then, why didn't they phone me up? But, of course, this is a very inexperienced staff. People get sent to Suriname —at least at that time they were sending people on their first tours in a new field—what do they call that—an excursion tour. For instance, my administrative officer was, out of cryptography. They had taken people with talent out of the communications field and given them excursion tours to see how they would do as administrative officers. The one I had was terrific and very good and is still in the administrative field. The second one, too, was that.

So they sort of had to learn the hard way, and they were learning on you. I think I was expecting too much. I think that if I had had better briefings, I wouldn't have been upset. After I got back, when new ambassadors were going down and they asked me for briefings, I tried to talk to their wives, too, to alert them to this. I didn't find them very receptive, because this was the culmination of a career, and they weren't wanting to hear this. But, at least they weren't going to go down there with any illusions based on my experience.

Q: Did you have a chance to talk to Owen Zurhellen before you went down?

OSTRANDER: No, I didn't talk to him. I talked to the secretary. He wrote me at length.

Q: You weren't able to talk to Helen either?

OSTRANDER: No, she was probably in London with her daughter again. Owen's letters were marvelous, but they were about what to do and what to get briefed on before I got down there. He talked a lot about what to do about bringing food, and we were given an ample allowance. You know [in] Suriname back in the seventeenth century, you died if the ships didn't get in, because there just wasn't anything to eat there. I don't think it's changed

that much, because if the ships get held up somehow or other . . . my meat came from New Zealand.

Q: Do they fly that in in freezer planes?

OSTRANDER: No, they brought it by ship. I assume that they still do, and it was fine. My office was in the tallest building in Suriname—it was on the sixth floor, and you could see the ships coming in so you knew very well whether or not your furniture had arrived, or the meat. “Ah, it's New Zealand; that means that the meat is here.”

I had a lot of freezers. Their fishing industry there, which is now also gone, [gave us] marvelous shrimp. I also did a lot of fishing on my own and stocked the freezers.

Owen Zurhellen wrote me very good letters, as I was saying, telling me what to bring, so I went down here to one of these warehouses and got one of those dollies and bought a thousand dollars' worth of food. It was cases of food, and it was a lot of fun.

Q: Of course, you had already entertained so much that that was no problem for you. What sort of entertaining did you like to do on your official—.

OSTRANDER: They had a cook who was superb, Soeki. The servants went home at night. As a matter of fact, they all went home at noon unless I was doing something, and then came back if I needed them. I soon learned that unless I was having a dinner party or a reception, I didn't want them back. It was kind of nice just to mill around the kitchen and fix something for myself.

I started giving dinner parties at first, because it seemed the thing to do, but I soon learned that that wasn't going to do for me. Of course, you have the wives to dinner parties, and the money doesn't go very far when you're doing that. I didn't get much representation money.

But also, after dinner, they followed the custom of withdrawing, and the women were always in one end of the room or withdrawn somewhere, and the men—who were the ones I was supposed to be with—were over somewhere else. And as much as I like to talk to the women—because I'm doing both roles, so I like to know where they buy things, and it's good to find out about schooling, because I've got a staff with children and all that sort of thing. But what I really was sent there for was to find out about the political side of things and that was over there where the men were. Now I could get some good things from the women on that score, but I needed to be talking to the men, and it just wasn't working. I would invite my DCM whose wife wasn't there, and turned him loose over there, but it wasn't the same.

So I decided, what I'm going to do is reserve the dinner parties for just social times, with good friends, and wanting to get together with the women, and I will go the luncheon route otherwise. And that's what I did, and that worked magnificently. Three or four times a week I had luncheons that usually started about one, and then since nobody was going back to the office, they were going home, they would leave about three. I would have only one table of twelve or fourteen people, in a circular table, and I invited only the men, which meant that it could go a long time.

I don't mean to say that, because there were times when I invited women, too, but it depended on what their job was. There were an awful lot of women doing an awful lot of very good work in Suriname.

I had, for instance, a group that would be in the multilateral area: the EEC man, the U.N. man, the World Health Organization man, this sort of thing. Then I would have a group that was labor union, and the minister of labor, and labor affairs. A group that was press and media. It worked marvelously, because they were all delighted to see people they knew very well, and they really opened up and talked about the issues that interested them all, and I learned a great deal. I used this when visitors came, too. I welcomed every visitor

from the U.S., whatever they were coming for, because it would give me an opportunity to invite another group.

Soeki the cook was superb. I could call him at eleven o'clock in the morning and say, “I've got to have a luncheon. Can you get something together for fourteen people by one o'clock?” And it was always marvelous.

Q: Now tell me about Soeki.

OSTRANDER: He's Indonesian. Last name was Rachman, which is, of course, a Dutch name.

Q: And he had been the embassy cook for a while?

OSTRANDER: Owen Zurhellen got him because the cook Owen had when he got there quit—I think was hired for a big hotel in Aruba. So Owen, who is not a shy person, went to a luncheon out at one of the hotels and found it delicious, and just walked right back into the kitchen and hauled Soeki out and hired him. Q: It's a way to get a good one.

OSTRANDER: Well, he was great. He always wanted to check the menus with me, and he would come in a couple of days before. I tried to plan the luncheons at least a week in advance, and I would write them down on the calendar. He fixed my lunch every day, no matter what. He didn't fix my breakfast or my dinner, so he came for lunch. He would come in with his with his pencil and paper, looking very, very serious. He would say, “Now, for the luncheon on whatever, the head of the Supreme Court's going to be here, and the last time he was here we had beef, so what do you think we'll give him this time? What do you want to start with?

I would say, “Oh,—let's start with your delicious pumpkin soup.”

“Well,” he would say, “I was thinking that perhaps maybe the clear consomm# would be better on this occasion.”

And I would say, “Of course.”

Then he would say, “What, ma'am, do you want for the first course?”

And I would say, “Are there any of those shrimp left over?”

“Well, I was thinking of some of the tukunari fish.”

And I would say, “All right.”

And then, “What do you think for the third course?”

“Well, let's go with your delicious cordon bleu.”

“Well, I was thinking maybe chicken kiev.” [Laughter]

And he would always have the menu, and we went through this farce because he insisted.

Q: I gather he kept track of what he had served everybody.

OSTRANDER: If he kept any files, I didn't know it. He must have remembered it.

Q: Did you actually write it out so that you wouldn't repeat what you gave to somebody?

OSTRANDER: No, I relied on him entirely. I kept full records, that is, my secretary did—of who came when, who was invited, who didn't show. A third time they didn't show, they didn't get any more invitations. That's just all there was to it, unless there was some really good reason. But on the third time telling you they're going to come and then don't, or if they turn you down flat three times, then I just decided they really—for some reason or other—weren't interested.

Q: Did that happen very often there? Was it a certain group of people?

OSTRANDER: The labor union people were difficult. I can still remember talking to some labor person and introducing him to somebody else who was in labor, and thinking that they would get along, and he turned and snarled at me, “He's a company man.”

I learned something then. Maybe it's a fear of the company man that they don't want you—I don't know. Anyway, they came often enough, but I never knew until the last minute who was going to show up at the front door.

Q: So you had to keep it fluid.

OSTRANDER: Sure did.

Q: With a round table. Was the round table there, in the house?

OSTRANDER: No, they weren't round. I think maybe Owen did that. Somebody had round things built that went on top of the nice mahogany table. I expect it was Owen, too,—it would sound like him—that had marked on there where to put the plates if it was for nine people, ten people, eleven people, twelve, thirteen, fourteen, whatever. So that the staff could just come in and find the number and put the plate there for it. It was great.

Q: Did you use seating plans?

OSTRANDER: Oh, yes. My secretary did those and cleared them with the DCM, who was supposed to be protocol officer. Just as I went out the door about fifteen minutes ahead of the luncheon, she would hand me the seating arrangements and the place cards. She kept files of place cards so that she could use them over and over again, if they came back. And she kept track of who was invited, when, to make sure that I got everybody in, yet didn't overdo one.

Q: To do this systematically as you obviously did, seeing different groups of people and then going to certain parties and all the national events, you must keep a very close set of records, I should think. You'd get completely bogged down, wouldn't you? You wouldn't know who you'd had where, or who you owed.

OSTRANDER: You're talking about countries that have more than 313,000 people in them, I think. [Laughter] USIA does list people, as I'm sure you know, with their country plan, as to who are the movers and shakers and in what audience they should be reached. I kept copies of those lists and made sure that everybody on that list got invited at least once during the course of the year. Other people too, but everybody on those long lists—they were long lists—and they sure got in a reception or whatever.

Q: It's a lot of work, isn't it?

OSTRANDER: Yes, it is. I only got $5,000 a year, as I recall. And let me tell you that I made that money stretch—fishing for the first course is one way to make the money stretch.

Q: You mean you actually fished yourself?

OSTRANDER: Yes, and was very proud when I looked down at that and realized that I'd put that on the table.

Q: What would you have, three or four courses at lunch?

OSTRANDER: A soup course, a fish course, the main course, and a dessert.

Q: No salad?

OSTRANDER: Yes, there was always a salad.

Q: Well, then that's five, isn't it? I presume you did the salad separately.

OSTRANDER: Yes, I did. They eat the big meal at noon. I had a good thing going with fresh vegetables, because at that time we had the Air Force refueling in Suriname.

They flew down from Wright Patterson Air Force Base, oh, maybe once every three months or so, and refueled in Suriname, and they very kindly would get in touch with me and say, “What can we bring you?” So we had this agreement that, so long as it was for representational purposes, they would provide from Wright Patterson. So I got lettuce and apples and all these fresh things that were just absolutely impossible to get otherwise—and it was such a treat. Every three months, and Soeki could make that stuff last a long time. I don't know how he did it.

I always also made up a small basket—I tried to make them very attractive—not such a small one, of cauliflower and one sample of everything, and sent it over to the president.

Q: Why how nice. Did you do this each time?

OSTRANDER: Each time. Oh, they loved it. His wife told me that he always insisted, whenever that basket came, that he would make the salad himself. So you can make it do a lot.

Q: Was that your idea to do that?

OSTRANDER: Yes.

Q: What a clever thing. See how far-reaching that is.

OSTRANDER: Oh, you bet it is.

Q: You sent him a cabbage, and he had good will towards America. [Hearty laughter]

OSTRANDER: And he sent me a parrot, which I loved dearly. He thought I was lonely, and I sure was in that big house. There's nobody to talk to. If you have problems with your

staff, or worries about your staff, there's nobody to share that with, absolutely nobody. Or concerns about them. Or wondering how to use them to better advantage. And you just live with it.

Q: How much talking can you do with your DCM? I mean, you had selected your own DCM, but probably from a list.

OSTRANDER: Yes, I had a list, and interviewed everybody, and selected Dave Cox. The bureau had pushed him and wanted him to go. And I must say, he had had experience in just about all the things that I hadn't had experience in. He knew economics, he knew political, he had done visits, he was familiar with U.N. He really had a really wide scope.

Q: That complemented yours.

OSTRANDER: Yes, that complemented mine. And so the bureau had pushed him, and I had no trouble going along with that.

Q: But he was nobody you knew?

OSTRANDER: No, I didn't know him. Unfortunately, he got sick after he'd been there about six months or so. Let me see, he got there in August or so, and I think he left in April. And then the Department left me six months with nobody. They didn't have a candidate; they didn't have anybody to offer. And the government was on the brink of falling. Alcoa was on strike. They'd shut the smelters down, so the economics of the country was falling apart.

I called the labor officer, who was regional, and living in Barbados when that happened, and he said, “I'm sure you can handle it yourself.” The Department said, “You can handle all the political reporting yourself, all the economic reporting.”

So I ended up doing just about everything there was. The USIA officer left ahead of schedule with no replacement. The consular officer was transferred, I remember, to Spain, and they were very sorry, but they couldn't get anybody down for another few months.

That's when I got the flavor of what it's like in a post that most Foreign Service officers don't particularly relish serving in, in a time when you can't really send anybody to a post unless they select it. And I think that's probably too bad; the needs of the service ought to come first. I think everybody's preference ought to be in there somewhere, but it ought to be part of the equation, not all of it.

Q: Well, I don't understand this. With the whole thing falling apart that way, why didn't your regional labor man come out?

OSTRANDER: Oh, it's his job, but he was assigned to Barbados, and he had the whole Caribbean, and besides which he said he liked my labor cables. [Laughter]

I, of course, talked to John Burke, who was in Guyana next door, going through hell over the Jonestown thing. He was such a stabilizing force for me. I'm sure he doesn't realize it. He sent over his number two man from USIA to help me out, and just, in general, offered me all kinds of support.

I can remember he called me up one day, and he said, “Nancy, I just want to tell you that the fewer people there are in Suriname, the better the reporting gets.” [Laughter]

I really needed a pat on the back by that time, and he gave it to me. I had my secretary, my code clerk, the administrative officer, who was an excursion tour code clerk person. At that time, my code clerk was leaving, too, and so I got a new code clerk. I had the old code clerk, before he left, doing consular work, and he enjoyed it. I mean he was delighted with the opportunity to do that sort of thing. It was a time when we were so short-handed that

I was asking everybody to do everything. The consular officer, before he left, was doing some economic reporting and some political reporting.

It worked, but oh, you know, you shouldn't be left that short. If they're going to open an embassy, they should staff it and support it. If they're not going to do that, they should have left Suriname without an embassy and covered it from Georgetown, Guyana, as many other countries did and do. It's the way I felt about it.

I'm sure they couldn't have cared less if they didn't hear from us. No, that's probably not true; there were important things happening there. Surely the economics office and the labor office were interested in what was happening with ALCOA. They were having a crisis at the time.

The political situation was such that it was building up to the coup that finally happened. I couldn't report everything that occurred, but I tried to get up a sort of wrap-up cable every week as to what had happened. I think under those circumstances what you've got to do is something similar to that. You've got to remember that you cannot afford to report on anything that isn't on your goals and objectives list, because nobody in Washington has time to read it anyway, and you've also got to keep in mind that you must report to a group of people that do not have the luxury of keeping up with everything that's going on in the country. But that means that every week, then, you're going to have to summarize what's happened before, and I didn't have that kind of time. So I was doing what reporting I could, and it sure could have been improved on, but anyway, it was a pretty adverse situation.

I finally got a new DCM, and I got a new USIA officer, and a new consular officer, so the staff finally did come together. Unfortunately, at that time I lost my absolutely superb secretary, Emily Grizzard. An absolutely remarkable woman, I would tell her what my troubles were, and she would come in with the most practical solution to the problem I've ever heard. She's just that sort of person that walks into the office, and everything just

automatically seems to fall into place. She protects you, a problem doesn't get to you unless it absolutely has to.

Q: That's wonderful. Had you selected her?

OSTRANDER: No, she had volunteered to go to Suriname just as Owen Zurhellen's tour was coming to an end. I wished I could have kept her, but Emily has two daughters, and they needed her back in the States, so she went. She said that's the only thing that would come ahead of her job.

Q: You're showing me a pretty agitated first six months, probably more than that.

OSTRANDER: The whole tour was that way! No, I would say that it was not agitated—everything went swimmingly—up until possibly the 19th of November, 1978, which is six months after I got there. What happened on that day was Jonestown.

Q: Oh! Jonestown. You people had to help cover that, did you?

OSTRANDER: We were certainly affected by it, in many ways. Of course, at the beginning, we thought people were out wandering around in the jungle, and so the concern was with our citizens. We thought also that a lot of them might be headed for Suriname, to get away from the place.

Q: You didn't know they were all dead at that point?

OSTRANDER: No, that information kept feeding through to us, little by little. Suriname and Guyana were in a shooting war at the time, but still Guyana needed planes to try to get out there in the jungle and see what was going on, and hoped that Suriname could help them out. So we were being asked a lot of things like that.

Probably the biggest impact was that I hesitated to bother the desk in Washington for anything, because the desk officer, Dick McCoy had previously been the consular officer

in Guyana, so he was very much in demand on this. Any time he had was spent with Guyana. Not only did everybody want to talk to him; he was also the person responsible for supporting Guyana. He was desk officer for Georgetown, too.

That went on for about a year, you know. Just not really willing or able to call on my desk back here because they were so completely and utterly occupied with that horror. And I don't mean to criticize; I was completely and utterly sympathetic.

Q: Of course. You couldn't call on the Department.

OSTRANDER: Well, I did only when I just absolutely had to.

Q: Yes, but you were having a coup down there, weren't you?

OSTRANDER: That didn't come until February 25th, 1980. But the political and economic situation had been really touch and go for six months before that. Elections had been called, so we were in the middle of an election campaign, trying to report that.

In January of that year, the sergeants in the military had gone on strike, because they wanted to have their own labor union, as they had back in the Netherlands when they were in the Dutch military. The Suriname government had not really given them an ear, and so they had gone on strike, but that had been settled. I think it was settled because the police sided with the government, rather than with the military.

In February, however, a bunch of these sergeants actually went into the barracks and found the arms stores wide open and the clips in the machine guns, so they just took over the barracks, and then went down and took over the rest of the government, shot up everything.

Q: Killed many people?

OSTRANDER: I don't think they killed more than six or eight, but still, I can remember that morning, three o'clock in the morning, hearing all the gunfire. The military barracks was in back of me. And waking at three o'clock in the morning and saying to myself, “It's Chinese New Year, and I wish they wouldn't shoot off so many firecrackers.” Something in the back of my mind told me that the Chinese New Year had been a couple of weeks before.

Q: You were half-awake, of course.

OSTRANDER: I was wide awake, [but] it couldn't happen in Suriname, in peaceful Suriname where nothing like this had ever happened before. And the guard out front was asleep, as usual, and so I thought well, “Everything is calm and serene.” He told me later, “I knew if there was anything wrong you would have awakened me.” Can you imagine? [Laughter]

Anyway, they did take over the base and then went down to the river and got on the one gunboat and started shooting shells off all over the city, trying to get the police. Some of their sergeants were supposedly in the police headquarters, in the jail, and they were firing on the jail to try to make them release their sergeants. They did not have good aim, and we could watch the shells go by. It was as simple as that. It was really a bad time. The firing on the city and the bombs lasted for about three days.

The Air Force was there at the time, refueling. It took all the ingenuity any of us in that place could pull together to get those extraordinarily expensive military aircraft out of Suriname that night. There were three of them, worth millions, and the airport was of course immediately closed. I still don't know how we did it. I remember a lot of work on our radios which we weren't supposed to have.

Q: Between you and the base you mean?

OSTRANDER: No, because that was too far away. I had a good friend of mine in between who would relay messages. I sent the DCM, and the administrative officer, with my USIA

clerk, who sort of knew how to get things done, down to try to negotiate how to get the planes out of there, and the Air Force officers who were in hotels [had to be taken] back to the planes. I finally got them into my car, and flew all the flags, and managed to get them down to the airport. We're talking about sixty miles, and the road's closed and blocked, and the shells [are] going all over everywhere.

Q: Did you go with them?

OSTRANDER: No, I did not. I couldn't. Somebody had to be back up at the office. They got through. By that time I had gone back to my house and I got the word there. One plane got off, and then another plane got off, and then the last plane finally left, and that plane flew over my house and dipped its wings. I have never been so glad to see anything go in my life.

Q: Well, how many officers are there per plane? A couple?

OSTRANDER: Oh, no! I had about sixty-five people.

Q: How did you get them out there?

OSTRANDER: Hired busses, as I recall.

Q: All your work in consular affairs and American welfare—

OSTRANDER: That helped.

Q: Must have leapt to the fore. You thought, “My job is to get these Americans out,” I suppose. “Protect my people.”

OSTRANDER: It was the planes I wanted out. The first call I had had that morning was that the Hindu radio that morning were reporting that the CIA had started the coup. Because they had seen the planes arrive that night. The planes had arrived just two, three

hours before the coup. So it was very important; [the Air Force] wanted out of there and they wanted their planes out of there.

Q: It was just pure coincidence they were there.

OSTRANDER: Yes, of course. They'd stopped to refuel. It was American property and those aircraft were very sophisticated. We wanted them out of there, and the colonel in command was beside himself wanting to get out of there. And we got them out.

Q: Did the military give you any recognition about it afterwards?

OSTRANDER: No, not that I recall. I always kind of had a feeling that they thought I should have known it was coming. Of course, nobody knew it was coming; not even the sergeants knew it was coming.

Q: In many of these countries, nobody knows, except the very small group that's doing it.

OSTRANDER: But they didn't even know it.

Q: They just happened to stumble on the guns?

OSTRANDER: They had decided that they were going to go over to the base and see if they couldn't get something going. I've heard they were hopped up on marijuana—I've heard all kinds of stories. But they certainly weren't expecting this, and they really didn't want the government. They wanted something entirely different. Once they got the government, there's no way they could give it back. They didn't know what to do with it when they had it.

The next months until I left in July were really touchy and really a challenge.

Q: Did you feel that much could be done, or anything could be done, at this time of great ferment, with, say, USIA?

OSTRANDER: Throughout all the time I was there, USIA, I thought, was the one tool I had to work with. Suriname was pulling away from the Netherlands. Had broken with the Netherlands and wanted to break with the old country. Somebody once asked me where Suriname was, and I said, “I think it's about forty-five miles off the coast of the Netherlands and beginning to drift southward.” They didn't know whether they wanted to be South American or whether they wanted to be Caribbean, and this was all a big dialogue that they had going within the government. They wanted to be very much closer to the U.S.

I had that feeling that they were going to be substituting their allegiance to Holland with allegiance to the U.S., and I thought this was a marvelous opportunity, and that what we should be doing was using the USIA to give scholarships and the like. Although this wasn't going to be a transition overnight, if we did have people getting their university degrees in the United States, eventually this was going to help. That meant that USIA could be very helpful.

I'll give you an example of that. You got a much better salary in Suriname if you had a degree from a Dutch university. You didn't get any benefit if you had a degree from a U.S. university. So working through USIA, we did manage to get that changed, through the Ministry of Education, that they would give these bonus points that you get for degrees, even if you got your degree from a U.S. university rather than a Dutch one.

Suriname was going to have to turn somewhere, because it had tied its guilder to the U.S. dollar, and with the cost of living going sky-high in the Netherlands, they were soon simply not going to be able to afford to go back there to school. So that's why I tried to get USIA to focus on and to build that tie, which I hoped would pay off much later. But I didn't have much of a staff at USIA either, so that was kind of hard to do. [Laughter] I think we probably did the best we possibly could on that score. pick and choose who would get them.

Q: You couldn't do as much of that as you wanted to?

OSTRANDER: Just simply didn't have the budget. I wanted so much to bring U.S. groups to Suriname, to expose them to the culture, and to get to know something about us. Because they know a great deal about Holland, but not about us. But the way USIA worked at that time, you had a budget, and then when any of these entertainment groups, or cultural speakers, or whatever, came near you, you could pick them off, if you could pay for them. But nobody comes near Suriname. They just don't go to the northwest coast of South America. Everybody goes to Brazil, but that is not close, or they go on the other shore [Pacific]. But that's terribly expensive, and if you don't have much budget to start with . . .I can remember a harp trio that had to quit. We had them set up to play in a place called Ons Erf, which means our earth, our yard. Very nice auditorium, but it's outdoors, and the noise of the frogs was so loud that the harpists could not hear each other. They really had a terrible time and had to give up halfway through, because all they could hear was the frogs.

I can also remember a young man who came who played piano, and he played very well, but it was also outdoors. I had him to lunch the next day and asked him how it had gone, and he told me that he had panicked because when he looked down at his hands just as he was ready to begin his concert, they were covered with mosquitos. [Laughter] It was this sort of thing.

Anyway, Suriname didn't get much in the way of entertainment. We did have lecturers who would go to the university, but somehow or other sometimes that would cause more trouble than it was worth. Depended on what they were saying. You have to know a little about Suriname, I think, before you come down there and give a lecture. You're too apt to be thinking Brazil or a country that has completely different circumstances.

I was grateful for whatever we could get through USIA, but oh, heavens. We had the Navy band once, and they loved it. Gosh, what I could have done with a good choral group. They loved choral singing.

Q: So all of these ideas that you had that couldn't work out—it was lack of money that kept it from happening?

OSTRANDER: Lack of money and lack of opportunity to get anybody there. I thought the USIA program was excellent. It just doesn't work in the remote areas of the world. For instance, if you had a choral group that was going to Venezuela and then on down to Rio, think of what it would cost to bring them over to Suriname, for a day, and then send them on down. Besides, there's maybe one plane a week, so they could drop off to do a concert and have to wait a week. If they are going to have USIA cultural tours—which I think they need in places that are remote— they're going to have to have some extra help from USIA in order for the post to be able to afford anything. Otherwise what you're going to get is something on a tape, and that's about it. Or one human being. You can afford that usually. One pianist, or harp trio. I thought we were lucky enough to get the harp trio, but I learned a lesson on that: don't have it in the mating season for frogs! [Tape recorder turned off]

Continuation of interview: August 12, 1986

Q: So you really were off the beaten track.

OSTRANDER: Absolutely, no doubt about it. Nobody was ever in the area.

Q: So most USIS money was spent on what?

OSTRANDER: Books, that sort of thing. We did have a few lecturers, [but] it just seemed to me they were saying the wrong things.

Q: They were thinking in terms of big countries, I suppose.

OSTRANDER: Perhaps that's what I meant there. They would give lectures that the next day made headlines in the newspapers, and it seemed to me that they turned around what they were trying to accomplish, because any human being who comes to Suriname

from outside becomes extraordinarily important, and everything he says is going to make headlines. Whereas in many universities, many lecture tours, what you said might be in one tiny little paragraph of some newspaper, in Suriname it becomes very, very important indeed. It sometimes stirred up a lot more than we had hoped for. I kind of dreaded it whenever there was a lecturer coming, as a matter of fact. We didn't have that many of them.

We did spend most of the money on books. Oh, we didn't have much money, let's face it. Books easily took care of that. We had the wireless file, and that was very helpful, and I sent copies to the right people in government and elsewhere.

Q: Well, shall we go into that coup?

OSTRANDER: I hate to talk about it. I find it very distressing always. It brings it all back, to talk about it. After about three days [the sergeants] had the entire government. They took the ministers prisoner and did not harm them.

I was extraordinarily worried about that because at the same time Sergeant Doe was doing his thing in Monrovia, and at night on TV we had pictures of the murder of the cabinet members in Monrovia. I didn't think these sergeants were going to resist temptation, but they did. The gunfire and the shooting and the burning lasted about three days. We had some hairy times.

Q: Were you yourself in personal danger?

OSTRANDER: No, although I didn't know it at the time. This [coup] was certainly not anything against the United States government. However, when the shells are going by the window, they don't know this. And you never know under circumstances like that if there's somebody who's going to—it was during the time that we had all the hostages in Iran. It could very easily have occurred: “Let's take some hostages and hold them and get what we want.”

My own judgment was that if they were going to take anybody hostage, it's going to be the Dutch, because this is one of the places in the world where, when there was a demonstration in the street and they were marching against somebody, it wasn't against the U.S. They were marching against the Dutch. I used to stand and watch them go by, and not wish my Dutch colleagues any harm, but it was kind of refreshing. But still, you can never tell.

I remember vividly that a very young Dutch engineer who lived cater-corner to me in Paramaribo with his family, came over and remained in front of my residence for three days. Just stood guard there, because he was worried about me. He was worried, and he never let me know he was there, but of course I could see him. He never tried to take credit or anything, and I saw him later when I was about to leave the post, and I thanked him for that, and he said, “You have no idea how worried I was,” and I said, “I think I do.”

A Dutchman, from whom we rented a warehouse space, had a very nice apartment at the top of the building, and he called me up and offered me that apartment if I needed to leave the residence. The Dutchman had two of the meanest Doberman Pinschers I have ever known, and he thought that they would be good protection, and I suspect that they would. As a matter of fact, they would have scared me to death.

Q: Was there much trouble on the base which you were right in front of?

OSTRANDER: Well, they shot the place up and killed the guards there. This had been my plan: if anything ever did happen, I would go to that base. The prime minister lived very close by, and if worst came to worst, I could take refuge in his house. Of course, he at the time was running and taking refuge in the police station, which was later blown up and burned in order to try to get him. So the two safe-haven areas I had staked out were gone. I had British friends who lived in the bush. You could only get to their place by river, and they were not too far from the coast. And although the U.S. government had no idea of my plans, I felt that, if worst came to worst, I could go down and talk one of the Javanese

boatmen into taking me up river and they could have gotten me up to the very forlorn coast, and somebody could have picked me up from there. All of that would have been pretty easy. There were some 400 citizens, however, that I was responsible for.

[The following was originally off-the-record but was added by Ambassador Ostrander in 1992. It is not on tape.]

We were in danger, of course, but not because we were Americans. The Suriname army was at war with the police force, and under those circumstances, everyone is in danger. There was no way out, however; the airport was closed and there was no way to walk or even go by canoe south through the jungle to Brazil and its jungle. The only possibility was to drive east to French Guiana or west to Guyana, but there is only one road and it is dissected by many very wide rivers. There were no bridges, and the ferry boats were not allowed to operate. (The word guyana, by the way, is Amerindian. It means “land of rivers.”) When you see those mighty rivers you really begin to appreciate Papillon. [Book written by a one-time inmate of the French penal camp on Devil's Island in French Guiana.] They say the book wasn't really true. Well, his description of the rivers certainly was!

A sort of fatalism takes over when you are trapped like that, and you take events one problem, one hour, one day at a time. The worst lasted only about three weeks. By “the worst,” I think I mean total uncertainty as to what was happening or would happen. My DCM was a tremendous help at that time. He had a military background and knew how to deal with the sergeants and roadblocks and curfews and special passes to be out of the house or to drive—that sort of thing.

I remember that first day of the coup. The airport was not yet closed and the early morning commercial flight arrived from Georgetown, Guyana, loaded with Cubans. They had a large Embassy in Guyana. When I learned of it, I called the President of Suriname (he still seemed to be in authority), and said I thought this could turn into an ugly problem since

they were obviously trying to take advantage of a chaotic political situation. (Those were their usual tactics.) He agreed and saw to it that their visas were revoked and that they returned to Georgetown. The same Cubans returned to Paramaribo the next morning with new visas, and by that time, the sergeants had enough control so that there was nothing either I or the President could do.

The sergeants at first hoped to keep President Ferrier in office as a sort of figurehead. The 16 NCO's (by now the 16 colonels), however, were really totally in charge. They formed the “Road”—a council or a junta. After that it was a matter of watching who would knock off whom (in one form or another) and remain in charge. It took a lot of months. A man named Bouterse prevailed, and he does to this day.

The world press also got to Suriname on that first day after the coup. They descended on the Embassy—on the pitiful few of us there who had so many other things to do. I found them a really lazy lot. I was happy to talk to them and to brief them on what little news there was. They seemed to want it all handed to them—to have their copy totally prepared for them. They seemed to have no intention of researching anything by themselves. We did our best, but we were sinking fast into a sea of work, and no help seemed to be en route. The U.S. cavalry was not galloping to the rescue with Errol Flynn heading the charge!

Just when I felt we really couldn't handle this without help, the news broke that Diego Asencio, our Ambassador to Columbia, had been taken hostage. The news people vanished into thin air—well, into the only plane still running. They went to Columbia and left me to deal with Suriname. What a relief! I was very worried about Diego, but if it had to happen, his timing was right for me and my small staff.

At the Embassy, we were trying to get back to some semblance of order. Morale was really high (after the shells stopped coming at us) in spite of the total frustration of trying to keep up with a government (I use the term loosely) that was in a constant state of flux.

The first July 4 (four months after the coup) was memorable. The top government officials —friends, dear friends—were imprisoned. I thought I would still like to have the usual noontime glass of champagne ceremony since I was about to leave Suriname. I did not know how this would be received. The curfew was still on at night so there had been very little entertaining. I invited the usual high-level business community and new government officials. I did not know what to do about the 16 colonels. They were still carrying their Uzi automatic weapons everywhere they went. I finally decided to invite them, but alerted them that I would not welcome any Uzis. They would have to leave them at the door, like in the old West. They did not come. My guests and I were more relaxed without them.

The short speech I made that day was a pretty good one. I had a book on my library shelf that contained written eye-witness accounts of events in U.S. history. One was an account of a feast held in the backwoods of Ohio in 1788, Marietta's first Fourth of July. They had a lot of food! The table was 60 feet long! Just as they were to eat, there was a cloudburst (in Surinamese a Sibi Boesi—literally “it sweeps out the forest”)and a lot of the food was ruined. This happened twice more. No sooner was the food ready than there was another Sibi Boesi. Finally there was almost nothing left to celebrate with except grog. And they drank toasts for the rest of the day. I put all those wonderful toasts into one. Among other groups, we drank to the Constitution, the Congress, General George Washington (not yet President), to “the memory of heroes,” to patriots.” There were 13 toasts in all. I added a fourteenth—to “absent friends.” The message got through, I am sure. But then they knew all these underpinnings of democracy were going. They simply were helpless to stop it.

On looking back on those days, I remember the sadness of seeing a new democracy that held so much promise suffering this terrible setback. I remember the loneliness of my own position there and the feeling of helplessness to do much of anything to make matters better. Washington was not interested, or so it seemed. This was Dutch turf. But it would have been really difficult for Surinamers to ask for help from the old colonial power. The regional desk seemed almost angry at me for reporting bad news—for presenting

them with yet another problem. Jonestown was still an issue; hostages both in Iran and Colombia were very much taking up the attention. No one had time or much interest in worrying about this small nation on the North Coast of South America. I sometimes wondered if the powers that were even knew where Suriname was.

When I first reported the coup by telephone, the regional director told me to “take refuge in the embassy compound and to call in the Marine guards.” My heart sank—he was not even aware there was neither compound nor Marine guards. Such advice was far from reassuring.

The sergeants were not very sophisticated or politically wise about how to govern, at least in the beginning. The coup had succeeded, but without any planning for how to proceed before, during or after. It was a spontaneous thing—a surprise to everyone—most of all to the sergeants (now colonels). A few days into the new regime, a group of soldiers entered the embassy ready to search the place. They had heard the prime minister was hiding there. I tried knot to create a scene or to make them feel foolish by downplaying the incident. I had the admin officer explain that this was U.S. territory and under international law, they couldn't search the place. They said they didn't know that and then left quietly! The prime minister, I later learned, was with the Catholic archbishop.

During that first morning, when the shells were bursting around us, my staff asked for permission to take down the flag as a safety measure. I did not give it. The insurgents were anti-Suriname government and anti-Dutch, but not anti-US (yet), so I felt the flag could be what saved us from a shelling. [End of insert]

OSTRANDER: There was something that ran through my mind: “If you're not going to get out of this, you at least don't want it written up in the history books that you ran off and left 400 people and took the flag down! [Laughter] It's just not done. It's not cricket. Especially when you're not sure what's going to happen. Maybe if you really thought, “They're after me.” I don't know, maybe you would do something. My good friend, Thea, who is British

and traps animals under contract with European zoos, I must say, she came to mind, too. I thought, “Thea could get me through the woods and to French Guiana.” So I did have in mind ways that I could get out, but then suddenly realized: “You can't. There's no way the other people could get out. You can't do that.” It would be like only one person could leave the Titanic, and you elected yourself.

Q: And you don't do it.

OSTRANDER: Of course you don't do it. Now if somebody said, “We elect you, because you are the American government: you are going,” that's another thing, but you don't elect yourself.

Continuation of interview: September 9, 1986

OSTRANDER: There has to be some political advantage, to be selected over all the other qualified people there are in the Foreign Service, especially since there are so very few jobs. And it really is pretty remarkable if you come along with the right qualifications for the right post at a time when it is politic to appoint a career person, when it's politic to appoint a woman, when it's politic to appoint somebody, in my case, in a consular cone—it just all came together at the right moment. When also, at the same time, I think there was no great hue and cry for any particular male going to Suriname that all the bureaus that get involved in this and the hierarchy were particularly interested in. As a matter of fact, I think probably the one thing I was pretty good at was knowing when that moment arrived and when that post arrived, and inserting myself into it.

Q: Exactly. I think the way you saw that that was your chance, and it would be your only chance, probably. That you matched the job and the job matched you, and so forth.

Before we leave Suriname, I just would like to ask you, going back to the first day of the coup—I'm not interested in the politics. You've explained that very well. What I'm interested in, is your reaction to this. You said you woke up. . .

OSTRANDER: Three-fifteen, around then, in the morning. You could hear the firing, which sounds like firecrackers. I always tell myself, remember that rifles and automatic weapons sound like firecrackers. Firecrackers sound like automatic weapons, so if you really think it's firecrackers, you'd better watch out! Well, the guard didn't seem upset, and the firing didn't last very long, the weapons fire. And I kind of paced the floor and wondered about this for about, I think, forty-five minutes, but then everything got quiet again. And the guard was calm, and probably asleep.

So I went back to bed, but was awakened at about five-thirty in the morning by the telephone ringing, and this was a young man who worked for us in USIA, whose political antennae were excellent. His background was Hindustani, which is what they call the ones who came from India. He called to say that the early morning Hindustani news broadcast from Suriname had said that there had been an attempt against the government that was CIA-backed, and that since things hadn't been decided yet, the shooting would continue. By that time, I was beginning to hear the shooting, which was down by the river bank, which is where the embassy was.

Q: But in the middle of the night the firing was at the camp, which is right behind you?

OSTRANDER: Which is right in back of us. What had happened was that the sixteen sergeants, when they had taken over the military camp, and had found all of the weapons in there with gun clips in place, had suddenly realized that they had the military base, and what were they going to do with it? They hadn't really thought beyond that. So they got their weapons and went down to the waterfront with the idea of rescuing the sergeants who were in jail, their buddies who were in jail. The Prime Minister took refuge in the police station, which is where the other sergeants were held, assuming that they would not fire on the police headquarters because they would be firing on their buddies. Somebody, however, had not bothered to tell the other sergeants that their buddies were in the police station.

The Suriname military had one coast guard cutter, a small boat really, which patrolled the Suriname River, and which was armed. So they went down, and got into that, and started shooting shells toward the police station. Not knowing much about how to aim guns, however, they were hitting all over the city. These shells were falling all over the city.

Since the American embassy was in the tallest building, on the sixth floor of a six-floor building, the only one in town, it was very tempting. We could look down on this boat and see somebody trying to aim this gun, and not being able to. It was really fascinating to watch it and see the shells go by the building. We were about three blocks from the police station. They did finally manage to get the police station on fire.

They finally got the sergeants out, and the prime minister, who had taken refuge there, took refuge elsewhere. We later, three or more months later, found out he was with the Catholic archbishop.

Q: Well, did they actually fire at the embassy?

OSTRANDER: No, they were not firing at the embassy.

Q: Did they hit anywhere near?

OSTRANDER: Very near. Very near indeed. I was not frightened by that.

Q: So you went to work at your usual time?

OSTRANDER: Went to work. My driver came by and we went to work. When he started to pull down the main street, which headed to the embassy, you could see the results of shells coming in—it was pretty obvious that they were shelling it. So he went around a back way and pulled in, and I went up to the embassy to get a telephone call off to Washington, because most communications from Suriname are by telex, and all the telexes go through the Foreign Office, so they just pull the plug. And through the telephone

company, too, they can just pull the plug. So I thought, before they start cutting off communications, I think I'd better telephone. We did that, and I got through and told them what was happening. We actually, since we had our own communications, stayed in communication throughout the whole thing. Q: You said that this period of turmoil lasted at least three weeks.

OSTRANDER: At least three weeks. We didn't know from one day to the next what was going to happen.

Q: Was there a curfew?

OSTRANDER: There was a curfew from five to five, I think it was, and that lasted for months and months and months. We had to have special passes.

Q: But you kept on. You kept the embassy open and you kept working the entire time.

OSTRANDER: Oh, yes. We never closed.

Q: On looking back, what are your strongest memories, and what do you think you learned from all this?

OSTRANDER: Suriname? I loved the Suriname people. I really did, and regret that it's so isolated to begin with, so you lose track. In the second place, so many of my friends are now in the Netherlands, and I've lost track of them. The traffic pattern is Netherlands-Suriname, and not U.S.-Suriname, and it's so hard to get there, and so hard to communicate.

But I really regret having circumstances cutting me off from those wonderful, wonderful people. There was a country with so much promise. I really had great expectations for what would happen to them, and this whole coup has brought the hope that they offered,

the promise that they offered, to a complete standstill. It will come back again, but it's going to be a hiatus, you know. Just really tragic.

Q: Well, you also made a very good point, which I have taken due note of, that the United States missed a good chance at that time.

OSTRANDER: Oh, yes. Most definitely. And yet I could understand why we missed a very good chance, in that the people of the United States would never have backed any such action by our government. They didn't know where Suriname was, in the first place, and why are we going to spend money in this place? Let the Dutch move in. And that's very good thinking, except if you stop to compare, as I did last time, with what if it had been us in our revolutionary days, and everybody had said, “Let the British help them,” we wouldn't have taken anything from the British, and that's all there was to it.

Q: Did you feel, when you got there—I mean, you had realized when you were working back at the Department, that this was your chance. You were perfectly suited, ready for this job, in other words, and events proved to your own satisfaction that indeed this was the right place for you?

OSTRANDER: Oh, yes. I think so indeed. I think I did a good job for the U.S. government there. I don't know how much I did for the people of Suriname, but then again, that's not my job. That's not my job at all. It's not a popularity contest, by any means, by any way of thinking. Although I was very popular.

Q: You provided a good example for women. That comes through pretty clearly.

OSTRANDER: I think so. I think so, except I'm not sure the Suriname women needed any example. I think they're really strong; they're really remarkable.

Q: Well, maybe they needed to be pointed in the right direction, though.

OSTRANDER: I don't even know about that. I think you'll find in most developing countries the women are a very strong resource. Now I'm not sure the men realize what a wonderful resource it is, and I often said to them there, “Remember that as a developing country you need all the resources you can get, and don't forget what a wonderful resource your very strong women are.” They're not only young and strong, but very creative, and they seem to know how to solve problems.

Q: Common sense.

OSTRANDER: Absolutely. Common sense. Tell them what the problem is, and they'll solve it. Now they may not go through the right bureaucratic channels, and they may do [it in ways] that you would consider politically naive, but they'll get the problem solved. You won't even know how they're doing it; just wake up one morning and it's done. I think all developing countries could use that resource probably more than they do. Or maybe they all use it; maybe the women just aren't getting credit.

Oh, it was a learning experience. Most definitely. Most definitely a learning experience. There were the old frustrations, though, that I'm sure that everybody who's ever served in a developing country feels, and that is, the wonderful plans. Let me say that they seem to be able to draw up the best plans for how to move their governments ahead, how to solve their economic and their development problems. It looks so good on paper, and then here comes the monetary backing, but something happens in the implementation. It just doesn't move. It's like “'lasses in January,” as the old saying goes. It just doesn't seem to get going—to get off the paper.

And I don't know why. The middle management isn't there—something isn't there. If you make a landmark and go back and [say] “Every year I'm going to go look at it, and see how much further they've gotten,” it isn't going anywhere. And you can't figure out why, because the planning is done, and they've done it, so it isn't that somebody else is doing it for them.

Q: And you've become so empathetic to these people that you're sort of egging them on, I suppose.

OSTRANDER: Of course, you want to see it move. You want to see it happen. You want to see it get ahead.

Q: How did you feel about yourself after all this? This was a very difficult assignment in many different ways, not the least of which was being where it was. Were you surprised at your own strength afterwards? Did you come out of this feeling pretty proud of Nancy Ostrander?

OSTRANDER: I came out feeling that I was more astute—that I knew more about political and economic affairs than I had ever dreamed I did. I had been told throughout my entire career that consular officers don't understand these things, for so long, that I had believed it. I mean about one-crop economies, or shall I say one-mineral economies, because we're talking bauxite here. I knew about the importance of labor relations. I was able to judge political reactions and what they meant to U.S. bilateral relations, and I had been told I wouldn't know any of this. And I did know it.

Q: Why do you think this is? Because you had just absorbed it in all your posts abroad?

OSTRANDER: I think you absorb it. Well, I think you observe, and I think you observe the mistakes as well as what's done right by other people, as you grow within the Foreign Service. But if you're that sort of person, if you're going to hide and not get involved in that, I expect you can get through without observing.

I have talked before about serving in large posts, and its importance, because you are in a position to see how things are handled. Also to see mistakes. I can remember looking back and thinking, “Well, I remember Mexico City, that Tony Freeman did such and such

under such circumstances," and maybe that doesn't quite apply here, but it opens the mind to thinking about how things are.

Having a good DCM whose career has been the opposite of yours is also marvelous, and I did have that for my early months in Suriname, and I was able to learn from watching him and how he worked a group at a party, how he never relaxed at a party. Did not tell people how to do things, but asked how they thought of things. He never took their ideas for his own, but just got all of this information into the old mind, you know, and then computed it from the basis of U.S. interests.

I learned a lot from that, but I learned that at other posts, too. Small ones, and large ones, and middle-sized ones. If you want to look at it, and if your boss will give you the opportunity to read what's going out and what's coming in, if they'll let you sit in on staff meetings and hear what's talked about, so that you know what's important and what to follow, that makes all the difference.

Q: Do you think that your being a woman at this post was helpful to you in any way?

OSTRANDER: That's interesting. You know the Dutch are so used to women as rulers, because of the long dynasty of their women queens, so that [the Surinamese] certainly accepted me in a position of leadership without any difficulties at all, even though they're no longer Dutch, of course. But that was their heritage, so in that way that may very well have—although being Ambassador of the United States of America would have put you in a position of authority there, no matter what. But they certainly didn't bat an eye to have a woman coming down. They were rather pleased by it all.

Q: It didn't hurt you at all?

OSTRANDER: It didn't hurt me at all, that's for sure. Did it stand me in good stead? I doubt it. Because it was just a little too unique, I think, for most of the male ambassadors from

the other countries to totally accept. With most of them—not with all of them—but with most of them, I felt that perhaps they were condescending, at least at first.

Q: Specifically, what I was wondering was if you found that because you were a woman [you] were able to be blunter and to speak your mind with less worry about tact than a man might have.

OSTRANDER: Oh, I think probably true. I think probably true. Another thing, I could play dumb at odd times, whereas a man could never. I could say, “Gee whiz, I don't understand this at all. Would you please explain it to me?” And no man could ever say that. His pride would never let him, although it would be true. And it was true, in my case. I said “play dumb,” but I wasn't really “playing dumb.” “This is something you're going to have to start me from scratch on, because this is something that I've never run across. What in the world are you talking about?” And most men would not—

Q: So in a way, you used their condescension for your own benefit, didn't you?

OSTRANDER: Oh, you bet. But don't women always? I think we find any opening. We don't seem to have to worry about this “face” that men have to—how they come across with the other male.

Q: You don't have to be macho.

OSTRANDER: You don't. And if you're going to get what you want because some man thinks that you're a stupid woman—so what! [Laughter] You know, as long as I got what I wanted. . .I can remember this personnel officer once named Jean Farr. I've forgotten what the circumstances were, but it was when I was working in Personnel. I can hear her still, saying, “Well, I can always cry,” when things were really desperate, to get what was absolutely necessary for whatever cause she was working for in the Foreign Service. This was not for herself, but for the cause. She would say, “Well, I can always cry.” And men can't. Or they can, but they would never stoop to that. I'm sure they wouldn't.

Q: On the other hand, were you ever, say, kept out of a circle that you'd like to be in, because it was all male, such as a sporting club, where the men gathered to discuss matters?

OSTRANDER: Not as ambassador. It certainly did happen at the lower levels, though. I think I told you about that thing in Jamaica, if I'm not mistaken, when the ambassador was leaving. Perhaps I didn't. I think Walter Tobriner was leaving Jamaica. And they were going to have a country team goodbye party for him. The economic counselor picked a club for this goodbye party from the country team, of which I was a member, picked an all-male club, and announced to the DCM, who questioned this, “Don't worry about Nancy, I'll send her a bouquet of flowers.” [Laughter] This is true.

Q: That's a shocker. So it was a fait accompli.

OSTRANDER: It was a fait accompli, at which point the DCM said, “Cancel all of those plans. We will have the goodbye party at my residence.”

Q: Good for him. I presume it was a man [the Economic Counselor].

OSTRANDER: It was a man who said that.

Q: That's typical male thinking, isn't it?

OSTRANDER: Yes, throw me a fish or whatever; send me a bouquet of flowers, rather than to be included as the consular counselor. That's what happened. Ambassador Trobiner would have been the last person in the world to permit that sort of thing.

But that was 1968, and I think just about any time up to 1971 or '72, you would have run across things like that, and I'm sure that there were many other such incidents that I've just forgotten. American businessmen's clubs, all of these organizations that to be a Foreign Service Officer you need to belong to, were just not open to us.

Q: One suspects it's still true in the Middle East.

OSTRANDER: I expect so. I expect so. I don't know about the Middle East, but it's still true in the Middle West. The Rotarians and this sort of thing. However, when I was diplomat-in-residence, I joined the women's Rotary club in Indianapolis, and my only feeling from that is it's the men Rotary members who are missing something. The women were doing perfectly all right without their male counterparts. Gee whiz, what a vibrant bunch of women out there, and how much the men could be learning from them! So it's still true in some areas of our own society.

Q: Well, so you left having, on balance, been very pleased.

OSTRANDER: It was a very positive experience. I think I've told you that I'm not seeking it again. I don't think I want it again.

Q: No, no. It takes too much out of one, I suppose?

OSTRANDER: You fight all the way. It's just eternal.

Q: And the responsibility never lets up.

OSTRANDER: Oh, never. Especially since you're going to get the posts that are not going to be fully staffed, ever. Let's face it. The very small posts, if men are there, stand a better chance of being fully staffed than if there are women ambassadors. I'm sorry, but that's just the way it is. “Oh, let Nancy sweat a while longer. There's nobody dying to go there.” Whereas if you had a real nasty male, it gets staffed. And since that's the type of post that I would probably get if they ever asked me again, no thanks. I'm tired of that.

Q: When you came back to the United States, after I'm sure a round of tremendous parties and farewells and so forth. . .

OSTRANDER: Not really. Because of the coup, you see, they were still having the—

Q: So that went on till you left, did it?

OSTRANDER: Oh, yes, yes, yes. As a matter of fact, they asked the president to leave, just about, oh, maybe two or three weeks after I left there. But there was still a state of flux, and we still had a curfew.

[The following was added by Ambassador Ostrander in 1992. It is not on tape.]

I knew that President Ferrier and his family would leave Suriname soon as a result of the coup. They had been very kind to me and I considered them good friends. I wanted to do something special for them. I had been thinking about what my goodbye gift would be since shortly after my arrival two years earlier. I wanted to do something unique and I thought of the perfect thing when I first saw the great seal of Suriname. It was very attractive and I wanted to do it in needlepoint. I thought, “That really would be unique. I think probably no other ambassador anywhere has ever made a gift of his/her own needlework.”

I learned of a place in Florida which for a price (not cheap) would work up the design and send yarn and instructions. I worked on the project for months and months, then found a custom framers in Indianapolis who blocked it and put it under glass in an octagonal frame. It was gorgeous!

President and Mrs. Ferrier were very appreciative and actually took it with them when they had to leave the country. A picture of it made the newspaper and I got many favorable letters about the gift. One woman told me she was ashamed she had never thought of the idea herself—that it had taken a foreigner to see the beauty of Suriname's great seal.[End of insert]

I did have quite a few goodbye parties, but mainly afternoon things, and I hate goodbyes. This is one of those things—I am terrible at goodbyes. I would rather leave as a complete surprise. I would rather go to the airport alone.

I can remember when I left Cuba. I went around to say goodbye, and I get very emotional on saying goodbye. I walked into the agricultural attach#'s office, who was new and whom I had never seen before in my entire life, and tears pouring down my face, saying goodbye to him, and as I walked out the door, he said, “Who was that?” [Hearty laughter] So anyway, if I can avoid saying goodbye, I will, because it just really takes too much out of me. The day I retire I will hope to spring that as a surprise and walk out the door as if it were just an ordinary day, because I just hate it.

Q: I can understand that.

OSTRANDER: Well, other people seem to love big parties, and “Everybody come to my retirement.” They seem to adore it. And I just hate it. There were a few parties, but it wasn't as jolly as I suppose other people really wanted it to be because of the political situation.

Q: No. Of course. You know, one thing we haven't gone into is your health. Did you have any health problems from all of this strain?

OSTRANDER: Well, I've had high blood pressure now for quite a few years.

Q: Did it begin then?

OSTRANDER: No, no. Oh, no. It began in Personnel. That's where it began. I developed high blood pressure in 1961, in my first assignment to Personnel. It disappeared, then it came back in 1975 with my next assignment to Personnel, and has been with me ever since. That is, controlled by medication.

Q: Isn't that something! Did you ever pick up any of these nasty bugs that people get overseas? Amoebas, and so forth?

OSTRANDER: Dengue. I had dengue fever in Jamaica, and thought I had it again in Suriname, but figured I've had dengue, so I can't get it again, but later talked to a doctor there who said, “I have news for you. There are three or four different strains of dengue, and the one in Suriname is not the one in Jamaica.” So I probably had it again. I had a rash with it that time. I hate mosquitoes, because mosquitoes love me. And I fear mosquito-borne diseases, because I will get them. If there's no way to prevent them, I'll get them. I never had malaria, though.

Q: Good. You took the pills and all that?

OSTRANDER: Oh, yes. I always get all those shots because of that.

Q: You were in some very unhealthful places. But on the whole you—

OSTRANDER: Suriname had—put it past tense, because I don't know now—but the Dutch left them marvelous hospitals. The doctors there were all educated in the Netherlands. So it's a very unhealthful post, there's no doubt about it, but also excellent medical facilities.

Q: Do they still train in the Netherlands, or have they broken all ties?

OSTRANDER: I have no idea. I don't think you can break your ties when that's been your [culture]—and Dutch is your language.

Q: Looking back over your long career, and you certainly had a lot of overseas posts, do you think you paid a toll in your health?

OSTRANDER: Teeth. This sounds ridiculous, but I think I gave my teeth to the Foreign Service. I've had doctors look in my mouth and say, “Well, now, who did that?” “Let me see, that was Dr. Rodriguez in Cuba, but then when I went to Mexico, Dr. Whoever

undid that and redid whatever that had been, and then this was Dr. Ten Herkel in the Netherlands"—and that sort of thing.

Q: Bad dentistry.

OSTRANDER: Not bad dentistry, but just inconsistent. You never stick with the same guy long enough.

Q: But you do have your own teeth?

OSTRANDER: Well, several of them, but not many. I'm down to twelve.

Q: But you have such pretty teeth.

OSTRANDER: Well, most of them are not mine anymore.

Q: Well, then you've had good dentistry recently, then.

OSTRANDER: Very good. I told my last dentist hope to be buried smiling. I think at least fifteen, twenty thousand dollars.

Q: Oh, I'm sure, if you're telling me you've had to have all those replaced.

OSTRANDER: It's awful. It's terrible. That, I think is a health hazard that I do not think anybody really gives enough credence to. Moving around as we do all the time, I don't think we neglect our teeth, but I think we're apt to go to a dentist when there's a problem, instead of getting into the preventive stuff.

Q: Don't you think that's true of check-ups, and everything? You wait till you come home on leave.

OSTRANDER: Oh, yes. Till you come home. That's right. Exactly.

Q: And anything can be building up. Then some countries, as you know, have such strange medicine that they use to fight certain [diseases]. Sometimes it's very good, but other times, practically voodoo.

OSTRANDER: I can remember one of the junior officers who worked for me in Mexico City, who had a mouthful of fillings, and she came in one day and she said that she'd just been to the dentist, and they wanted to take all the gold out and put in silver. She said, “I'm not going back to him.” I said, “I think not.” So that's the sort of thing you can run into.

Otherwise, health—I'm a pretty healthy person I think. I gain weight terribly overseas, always, and that doesn't help the blood pressure. In tropics I gain weight. I had a doctor say to me once that there seemed to be a tendency—he didn't like to generalize—but men often lose weight in the tropics, and women are so inclined to gain it. And I don't know why—it's metabolism, somehow, the difference in metabolism. The lifestyle overseas, too, is not conducive to maintaining a slim figure.

Well, what else? Have I had any other terrible diseases? Soon as you leave I'll think of something.

Q: How's your energy level?

OSTRANDER: I think I'm pretty hyper. I don't really feel that I am, but when I go home to Indiana, I have people say they can't keep up with me. But you know, I think what that is, is probably just working for a living. I think that you find that when you do have time out of the office, you'd better make tracks. I notice a complete difference in thought patterns of my friends back there, who don't work. I make lists of what I must, must, must, must accomplish today, and they think, “Oh, I'll do it tomorrow.” They are trying to fill their days with things, whereas I am trying to get everything done so that I can have some time to fill.

Q: You're a very efficient person, aren't you?

OSTRANDER: Oh, yes. I've been told that.

Q: Very well organized.

OSTRANDER: That's the word. Very well organized. And am apt, I suppose, to order people around.

It does bother my blood pressure when I have a lot of things I have organized for the day, and my secretary doesn't come in, or when whoever it is that I need to see is out to lunch. That bothers my blood pressure.

Q: But you must be able to take a lot of pressure, all the same. You must be able to, to have arrived at where you are and to appear so calm all the time.

OSTRANDER: People say I appear calm but I don't really ever feel calm. I will notice that I will start apologizing: “I am very sorry I did so and so, and so and so,” and “I'm very sorry I said these things,” and “I was really under a great deal of pressure.” They'll look at me as if I were crazy, and say, “We didn't notice. You didn't say anything.”

Q: What about sports? Do you keep up with any particular games? Do you play tennis, or golf, or swim?

OSTRANDER: I swam a lot. Then of course, after you get to the place where your hair looks awful, so I haven't done that for years. About the only thing I'm doing now, and have long loved to do, and that is walk. I really am a walker, and this was so hard in Suriname, where as an ambassador, you can't—nobody lets you walk anywhere. Nobody lets you stick your face outside the residence unless you're in a bullet-proof car.

I love being anonymous. That's one of the things I love about Washington. Just being able to go any place, get on any bus or any subway you want, and go alone or with anybody you want, and just show up.

When we were at the War College, we each had to have an exercise plan, and I did get the Air Force official book on exercises, and I did those, and did those faithfully every day for a year. And I must say, they're absolutely right. You do feel a lot better by doing those.

When I was in Suriname, I had one of those stationary bicycles, and I used to do ten miles on that a day. I didn't think it helped at all.

Q: Now we've covered your health and the danger; were you given honors when you left Suriname?

OSTRANDER: Yes, the Order of the Palm from the government of Suriname. I got a nice cable from the President, which is, I'm sure, usual. Several colleagues around the world cabled to say what a good job I'd done there. I didn't get any honor award from the Department of State.

While I was on home leave, I got a little piece of paper scribbled by the Performance Evaluation Board and missent to Suriname that, since there was no efficiency report on me, and the board had been unable to get one out of ARA, I had been given a nonrate for the year. Which meant that I was down there facing those shells and going through all of this, and nobody had so much as even bothered to document any of this.

I picked up the phone that day in Indianapolis. Since that thing had gone all the way to Suriname—they had misdirected it—and then back to find me out on home leave, [I] called PE, and said, “I demand a recount. Give me at least twenty-four hours, because I know they're doing one [an efficiency report] up there.” I was still at an OC rank [Officer Counselor, formerly FSO-2]. I was furious. I was absolutely furious.

PE said they were very sorry, but it was so late in arriving, that they assumed I had known this, and that the board had already gone home, so it was just down the drain.

I raised such hell—let me tell you, you think I'm calm and quiet, you should have heard the hell I raised around here. The point was that ARA had had the retirements of [William] Bowdler and Pete Vaky, and it was just one of those things that all these guys had retired, and nobody had bothered to write any efficiency reports.

So I got my personnel counselor busy on it, and raised such hell that they did, eventually, after ten months of work, get all these people to write something on me.

I think it's just awful. Not having an ER didn't make any difference, I assume, to those who were already at the MC level [Minister Counselor, formerly FSO-1], although I still think it's awful, but I was probably the only person as an ambassador in ARA who needed a promotion. Who could be promoted, let's put it that way, as I was at the OC level.

So anyway, I did get the promotion, a year—it may have even been two years later. I think it may very well be the case that then they simply didn't write efficiency reports on ambassadors.

Q: It doesn't matter if you're non-career, but it certainly matters for the career ones.

OSTRANDER: Especially if they're at the OC level.

Q: It makes a big difference on what you get back here.

OSTRANDER: Oh, of course it does. Q: Well, when you did come back here, did they come up with something good for you?

OSTRANDER: I went to the Executive Seminar and loved it, although I did not want that assignment. I felt like I had been trained enough; that it was now time to go on to something else. I was offered one DAS [Deputy Assistant Secretary] position and didn't want it. I suppose it was wrong for me not to take it. But anyway, I'm delighted that I took that Executive Seminar year, because it was wonderful.

Q: You didn't like the area for the DAS?

OSTRANDER: That's right. It was in consular work, and I still felt very burnt-out in consular. I didn't feel—and this was honest—that I could offer them anything. Because I was still drawing something like a stone wall blank whenever I was told I would have to handle a consular case, and I just didn't think that this was right. I couldn't give them what I should have.

Q: What about inspectors? Were you inspected in Paramaribo?

OSTRANDER: I was, and they sent what they would call a mini-team, because nobody really wanted to inspect Suriname.

Q: How did they treat you? Fair? Superficial?

OSTRANDER: It took three days. It was fair. She says with little enthusiasm. They afforded it as much attention as I think the bureau really gives—or was giving at that time—to that part of the world. Which isn't much. And that's hard to take when you're there.

Q: Of course. When you say mini-team, what was it? Three people?

OSTRANDER: Three people.

Q: I think that's a very telling comment, that they afforded it as much attention as the bureau gives it.

OSTRANDER: I think so, too. And the American public. They feel that there is very little of U.S. interest in that part of the world. I think they are wrong, which they will someday come to realize if those nations down there afford a toehold for powers unfriendly to the U.S.

Q: We shouldn't ignore our closest neighbors, should we.

OSTRANDER: Especially neighbors that were at one time very pro-U.S. and may soon be leaning in another direction. May even now. [Break in tape]

Q: What would you like to say about the Executive Seminar?

OSTRANDER: Not much, except that that was a marvelous experience, and it's one that everybody should have.

Q: Where is it held?

OSTRANDER: It's over at the FSI building. You are looking at issues that are important to the United States of America, and which in turn will thus affect foreign policy. So if you're going to be making policy, you had better know what the motivations are.

There must be support from the people of the United States for a foreign policy, otherwise it's going to fail, and it's going to start failing first in the “boonies,” so you'd better know what the thinking is out there. And that's what this Executive Seminar helps you to do. Now, at least, that's what we learned in Vietnam. Whether or not that's true for all time, I don't know, but Vietnam sure failed first in the boondocks.

Q: Is this the Senior Seminar?

OSTRANDER: The Senior Seminar. It was called the Executive Seminar when I went in. It's now gone back to being called the Senior Seminar. We looked at domestic issues and spent a lot of our time on the road looking at them, and so it was really great.

Q: Where did you take your trip?

OSTRANDER: We took constant trips. I remember on the first trip we went to Chicago, where an exciting thing was riding in the back of a police patrol car. I spent one whole night riding in the back, and through one of the roughest parts of Chicago, and learned a lot about city problems. Also learned that I couldn't run up five flights of stairs even when

my life depended on it, and I was convinced my life depended on it. In a tenement with a woman being stabbed to death. It was really something.

Went from there out to a dairy farm just outside Omaha. That's when I learned that I was the only person in that whole seminar that had come from the farm. The marine colonel had come from a farm. But I was the only other one. I thought, “Gee whiz, I spent all these years trying to get off the farm, and now they're going to take me back.” But I did learn, because on my grandfather's farm, for instance, there was a little of everything. He was fattening hogs and steers, and raising chickens, but here was a farm that was nothing but just dairy. And the farmer had a computer and was in touch with Chicago markets and all that sort of thing.

We had trips to Denver, we went to Los Angeles, San Francisco, Boston. I sailed on the Nimitz. Just for one day. The Nimitz was in port, and had to pick up its planes, and they pick up their planes at sea, so we sailed out to sea to pick up the planes. Oh, gosh, all the different things we did.

Q: It's to put you in touch with the people in the U.S.?

OSTRANDER: That's right. The Navy had a trip, and the Marines had a trip, and the Air Force had a trip. I got into some of those Titan silos. As a matter of fact, in a tornado, I took refuge in one of those silos. I thought, “This is one hell of a storm cellar.” Out in the middle of the plains of Kansas, was it? We went through SAC headquarters. All over the U.S., and it was really fascinating.

Q: That's nine months, is it?

OSTRANDER: Yes. Right. I wrote a long paper, for which I did a lot of research; spent six weeks researching the paper. I wrote one on the Amazon Pact, which is something that I don't think anybody's ever heard of. It's sort of an amorphous-type treaty, but it's one that I think will mean something in the future. It's certainly the first time that the Amazon

countries have gone together on anything. It's an ecological pact to try to protect the Amazon basin and to do something about it, but it could grow into more than that.

Q: Among the countries that border on the Amazon?

OSTRANDER: Right. It used to be that anything that happened in South America, any sort of Pan-Am treaty, the U.S. was in on. This is not the case anymore, of course, and this is one of the first times. So there are a lot of implications in that for U.S. policy in the future. The “lungs of the world,” and whether or not we'll have any air to breathe, the ecological impact on the U.S. Also the political impact on those countries.

Q: When you came back, after having been an ambassador, did you have any decompression problems? Did you have any problems of adjusting to ordinary, everyday life?

OSTRANDER: Oh, no! It was easy. I absolutely adored being able to go whenever I wanted, wherever I wanted.

Q: Didn't mind not having a limousine?

OSTRANDER: Oh, heavens, no. I loved getting on the bus. I had felt like a prisoner. I just really hate that business. I love having a chauffeur, don't get me wrong. It's heavenly when you do have to go someplace, and somebody else has to park the car. I just hate having everybody know me everywhere I go. I used to go to the grocery store every now and then in Suriname. Everybody would drop everything—I hate that. Let me just wander around here. The freedom that comes with not having any office. No, I can't remember anything negative about coming back; about giving up the office. People seem to want to kill you because of the office you hold. They want to kill the office, really—not the office holder. But you can't shoot an office.

Q: Aren't you lucky your name isn't downstairs. [An honor Roll of persons killed while on active Foreign Service duty is on the walls of the lobby at the Department of State.]

OSTRANDER: I guess anybody who's ever been an ambassador whose name isn't down there is lucky.

Q: I know. Dreadful. You went into humanitarian affairs?

OSTRANDER: Okay. When I got out of the Senior Seminar, I can remember going over to hear the graduation address, a speech talking about how we were the cream of the crop, and he was sure that our onward assignments reflected that. Well, the military and the CIA among us had onward assignments, and those from the Civil Service were returning to their old jobs. Foreign Service Officers did not have any assignments. I think one person, who was going as political officer to Cairo, had his assignment. The rest of us were unassigned. The consular officer, come to think of it, was going to Seoul as consul-general. So that was two of us who had assignments, and the rest of us, nothing. Absolutely out in the cold, with no job. I think this is terrible, too, I really do, and it's not happened since, I think.

Q: How many are in a class?

OSTRANDER: Well, there were twenty-two or three of us all told; maybe fifteen State Department officers.

Q: Were you the only ex-chief of mission in this group?

OSTRANDER: Yes. I was. Anyway, what did I do? I was on a promotion board.

Q: In other words, you put in some time?

OSTRANDER: They put me on a promotion board, which I think I volunteered for because they didn't have any jobs. At the end of that, nobody had even contacted me about a job.

Q: What is that, about six weeks?

OSTRANDER: Yes. So I had heard that they were looking for officers who knew something about refugees and something about consular work to look over the files of the Iranian people who had asked for refugee status in the United States. When the Tehran crisis had started, Jimmy Carter had said, “We will stop considering cases for asylum in the United States,” as sort of a retaliation, and now that this crisis was over, they had once again begun to look at this tremendous backlog, every Iranian in the United States had asked for asylum.

So I volunteered to do that, and worked with Tom Recknagel, and really enjoyed this. They were sort of thrown into an ugly old office over in Arlington when I first began. It was the biggest mess I have ever seen in my life. There were no files, nothing. So I walked in there and set the thing up.

Q: Not again!

OSTRANDER: Yes. What was happening was, people were reapplying since they hadn't heard anything from us. So we were doing everything four and five times! I can't stand that.

Q: What a lot of paper!

OSTRANDER: Oh, it was terrible, all in big boxes sitting around. There weren't even any file cabinets. So anyway, I arranged the boxes alphabetically, and got it so that when peopledid ask us a question, we were able to find the case.

It's interesting in that I suddenly had to learn everything there was to learn about all those political and religious groups over in Iran. Khomeini and all these people. And whether or not their claim that they would be murdered the minute they went back to Tehran was valid. Of course, there were the Bahai's. Sight unseen, you could say they're going to be murdered. But you have to learn all this. I had to learn all the history of the revolution and all the history of all these religious groups, and so I found that a learning experience, too.

I did that about two or three months. Joan Clark was DG [Director General of the Foreign Service] at the time, and Diego Asencio was head of consular affairs. They had both together felt that they could use somebody who would do an in-depth study of the consular cone and consular program needs in the 1990s in the 1980s up through the early 1990s.

They asked me to do that, and so I spent from October until May of the following year. I did a two-part study: first part on what the needs for the cone were, or what you were going to have to do to the cone to provide a profession for consular officers, and what you were going to have to do to meet the demand for consular services that we were going to have, that we are having now in this decade.

I thought it was an excellent paper. As a matter of fact, that's the year I got promoted, so maybe I did perform a good service.

Q: Who should have given you an efficiency report when you were an ambassador? The DAS in charge of Central America?

OSTRANDER: Actually, the assistant secretary, is supposed to do it, and we had lost two; the turnover was very quick. Usually the desk officer writes it, and the desk officer had written it; I had provided material for it at their request. The thing that got to me was that I had been absolutely assured that there was an efficiency report there, and then they hadn't done it, and nobody had the nerve to tell me.

Q: Well, what happened to the one that the desk officer had done?

OSTRANDER: When they found it, it was in the DAS's office, I think, on its way to some special assistant's office.

Q: The business of only two in the Senior Seminar having onward assignments: would that be because that was 1981, and there was a new administration, and things were all at sixes and sevens back at the Department? Did it have anything to do with that?

OSTRANDER: Oh, I'm sure that had a lot to do with it.

Q: Because at that time, Reagan was bringing in a lot of his own people.

OSTRANDER: Right, and also I don't think that there was any great attempt in making senior assignments. You got the feeling at that time that if you were assigned out of the building for more than three months, forget it. “Nancy, who?” That was certainly the feeling, and I think it was probably very much the case. There were too few jobs to go around.

Q: The squeeze was on.

OSTRANDER: Oh, there was no doubt about that. The squeeze was on.

Q: Did you get any recognition for your study that you did on consular direction?

OSTRANDER: Every now and then I run across somebody—this last trip that I just made to Brazil, somebody said, “You're the one who wrote that paper.” And I ran into Sarah Nathness, who I hadn't seen for a long time, and she said, “Oh, I loved your paper.” So there's a little of that, but otherwise. . . .

Q: Are you telling me that you never actually got an efficiency report just on your days as an ambassador?

OSTRANDER: There were several memos that I stirred up, one from Pete Vaky, and one from the desk, that came in ten months late, and that were finally put in to try to fill that gap. Otherwise, there was no document in my file that says that I'd ever been in a coup. As a matter of fact, when I was on that promotion board, I mentioned it when we went up to see Joan. She said that I would be very surprised how often that happened, and that they didn't know quite what to do about it. Then when I was on another promotion board just recently, when I went up to see George Vest, with some suggestions on what to do about assistant secretaries who don't do efficiency reports, who consider it their prerogative not to do that, [I said} that I had thought up something I thought was really mean to do to them.

He said, “Not mean enough.” What others have suggested is absolutely withholding their pay until they do it. I said, “That's quite right.” My suggestion was not making them eligible for this bonus pay they get, and he said, “Others have said simply stop their pay until it's done.” So I said, “Well, that's hitting a little bit harder than I had thought was required.” Because other than pulling their fingernails out, they had heard about every suggestion there was. People don't think there's anything that they can do that's mean enough. Because it is—I wouldn't do that to a GS-3 typist!

Q: But are these people, the ones that do it, are they mainly political, or are they from the career?

OSTRANDER: I'm not sure what it is. But I did note that when people retire, especially if they're encouraged to retire because they're being bumped by a political appointee, they think, “Why should I kill myself to write an efficiency report on everyone? I've been told I'm to get out.” So I think there's a little of that sometimes in it, too, and I must say, that that's probably a very human reaction. “Why should I do something for somebody else when this is what's happening?” This does seem to be a service that the higher you rise in it, the worse you're treated! Oh, dear.

Q: Well, after that, then you became an inspector. How'd you like that?

OSTRANDER: I loved it in the inspection corps. I was not a senior inspector—I knew full well that I would be not be a senior inspector. Bob Brown, who was the Inspector General at that time, I had worked for back when he was running the Board of Examiners. He did not think I should be an inspector; he was never pleased with my work. His efficiency report of me, where it says what you should do to improve? He really thought I should improve my typing skill. I was an OC at the time. Bob Brown, in the first place, didn't want me as an inspector. He didn't really think I had shown what qualities—whatever they were—that he had wanted shown when I worked for him ten years more or less earlier on in the Board of Examiners. Although it wasn't a bad efficiency report. But anyway, be that as it may, he simply didn't want me in the inspection corps, and that's one of the reasons my assignment took that long. He finally conceded that if I was promoted, he would take me, but not as a senior inspector.

So I went in there with that cloud over my head. And I think that cloud was there throughout the entire time, because I'm sure that everybody who worked in SIG [Office of the Inspector General] understood that there had been this long fight. I don't know what they thought I was going to do to him, because I did a damn good job there.

I did not do as good a job as I thought I could—as I think I could do now. Frankly, because I was really aware that I wasn't wanted. It was difficult for me, although Lord knows, they were nice to me, especially Bill Edmondson was just super to me, and Dick Fox, too; both of them. But I always felt over-talkative, I always felt kind of apologetic, because I knew that Bob Brown didn't want me anywhere near there.

Q: Were you given a specific area to inspect?

OSTRANDER: They worked it out very nicely, most of the time. They found a place for me. But I had that feeling they were sweating it. Oh, God, what will we do with her this time?

Here she is at the top, and she's got the ambassadorial rank, and if she's not going to be a senior inspector—you know.

My first assignment, we went to Mexico, and I did the consular thing there, in Mexico City, but we have such a lot of posts there the team split up. Tony Ross took a group, and he led the inspection down the west coast, and I took a group and went east. So we split that, and then he had the overall responsibility and ran the team in Mexico City when I was doing the enormous consular section there, so that worked out very nicely. Gee, I like that guy. He handled that beautifully, and it was terribly touchy.

Then the next assignment I was working with only an auditor, and they gave me EEO [Office of Equal Employment Opportunity]. And there's no way, shape, or form I can think of that they could have given that job to some other person. I don't think there's anybody around who would have stood still for it. But I took that on, and I think I did good things there.

OSTRANDER: Then again I went with a team. This was Dick Matheron as the chief honcho. And this was to the Caribbean, and, of course, I couldn't go to Suriname, but what again happened, we split up, and I did Martinique and the Bahamas. I took a team to Martinique, Bahamas, Cura#ao, and they went south to Guyana and around in there. Then we came back and met in Haiti and spent, oh, about a month doing Haiti, and again I did the consular thing there, which is a big operation. So that worked again.

Then, the next team I went with, the same pattern. Jack Linehan led the team up to Canada. We started in Ottawa, looking at the regional thing. Jack went west, and I went east, with a team, and then we ended up doing Ottawa together. So you see how they were using me; they were working it out very nicely.

But then, the next two assignments were back in the Department. And we did INR [Bureau of Intelligence and Research] and IO [International Organization Affairs]. I can't say that either one was as enjoyable as being overseas. But I learned things about INR that I never

would have known, and I'm using that in this assignment. I'm using IO in this assignment. So I learned what they were responsible for and how they could help me. I just can't think that there's anything they can give you [for an] inspection tour that isn't helpful. Even though you're not too tickled pink about doing EEO, there's something to learn even from it.

Then I worked out the assignment to Indiana University in Indianapolis for the diplomat-in-residence.

Q: How did you like being diplomat-in-residence?

OSTRANDER: Again, I learned from it, but one of the things I learned is that I'm not a teacher. That's hard work, incidentally. That's awfully hard work. They kept telling me about how relaxed academic life is. I prepared the course in the first semester and taught the second semester. I had a class, a graduate course in how foreign policy is made. In the first semester, I had to write that course. That is hard work. You have to read everything in sight so that you can even pick the texts. And at the same time, there's a consortium of thirty-seven universities out there, and I was lecturing all over the state, and writing all those lectures.

Q: That's a lot of work. Sounds as though you had a heavier burden than a lot of them do.

OSTRANDER: I think so. My course was every Wednesday night, three hours, and if you've ever tried to keep a class entertained and to lecture for three hours—and to cover the whole thing. But again, what a learning experience for me.

Q: You structured this any way you wanted, did you?

OSTRANDER: Well, the syllabus has to pass, of course. And furthermore—something that wasn't in keeping with my undergraduate or graduate days—if you don't live up to the syllabus, the students can sue you! They can. You must have written down what you're

going to do in every class, and if you don't produce, or if something changes radically, why you're in for it.

Q: That's absurd.

OSTRANDER: The student body out there was suing some of the liberal arts professors because of the foul language that the professors used in their classes. I thought, “That's incredible.” Of course, I'm sure that the teachers were trying to interest the students and talk in the words the students use. But it's one thing when a professor uses them and another when they use them themselves. I think the students like to use them, but they sure don't want to hear it from professors.

Q: Did you have secretarial help, Nancy? OSTRANDER: Oh, yes. Well, I finally gave up though, because the secretary was the most overworked human being I've ever seen in my life. She was secretary in the liberal arts college. But she did help me a lot. I did all my own Xeroxing, and that's one of the things I learned, that to be a professor these days, you really have to be a good Xeroxer. Anyway, it was hard work. I enjoyed being home that year, and I hope I laid groundwork for some openings for when I do retire and go back there to live.

Q: But you don't want to teach?

OSTRANDER: I don't want to teach, and furthermore, do you know what they're paid? A thousand dollars for a semester, as a lecturer. That's not worth writing the lectures. Now if they want me to come in as a guest lecturer, I'd be happy to do that. Really like to as a matter of fact, every now and then. But I don't want to be working that hard to make a thousand dollars.

Q: You like to lecture?

OSTRANDER: Yes. I do. If I know my subject.

Q: What do you generally lecture about?

OSTRANDER: Well, one of the things I lectured about was population, strangely enough. And I gave the population lecture because that was a subject in the Great Decisions course. I don't know if you know about the Great Decisions course that's offered all over everywhere.

Q: No.

OSTRANDER: It's a course that's written by the Council of Foreign Relations in New York, and most of the universities teach it, but also other groups, and there were something like five different courses being given in Great Decisions in the city of Indianapolis itself. They pick twelve or thirteen topics a year, and write a book on it, and then the Christian Science Monitor carries an article on that issue every Tuesday, or something like that. I think it's January, February, and March. PBS has a program that they put on, on that issue, and then the groups meet, and they have read all their stuff, and then they just discuss it, or they have a lecture on it.

They came around and asked me which one I wanted to do. I had actually wanted to use that as a course at the university, but the university was already offering it three and four different places. So they asked me which lecture I wanted to take, and I chose population, which I think is interesting, considering my present assignment. And gave that lecture, and, gosh, it turned the people on.

I found that I really kind of felt a little strongly about the issue, because that was exactly at the time of our reversal in Mexico City, reversal of our population policy, so people were all interested in that. I found myself giving that lecture all around town, even in some of the universities outside of town. I had telephone calls from almost all over the state, saying, “We hear that you're the one who can give the lecture on population,” because they were using the Great Decisions Course, too. It's really a good one.

I could have, and I can in the future, give a Great Decisions course anywhere I want out there, without pay, and it might be kind of fun, just to keep your hand in.

Q: What was your syllabus? Was that concerned with population, too?

OSTRANDER: The one I wrote? No, that was the whole course, which was the graduate course in how to make foreign policy; public policy; how foreign policy is made.

Q: Did you have much interest from girl students?

OSTRANDER: Oh, yes. Oh, yes. I didn't have many students though, through a series of snafus, but I accomplished what the university wanted me to. Indiana University and Purdue University both have their foreign relations courses given on their home campus. But Indianapolis had wanted to start something in the graduate division, and they couldn't get any money for it.

So here I came with my salary, so I could open it up and at least make the way for grants for next year, and I think they actually did get them. But they advertised the class as being at eight o'clock in the morning in their catalogue that went out, and of course, older students who were in graduate school in Indianapolis are working. I had a few inquiries, but they could never quite make up for that mistake, although they sent something out publicly, so I didn't have a lot of students.

Q: When was it, at night actually?

OSTRANDER: It was at night actually; I lectured from five until eight.

Q: That's a tough time of day, because everybody's energy is at its lowest.

OSTRANDER: They all sat there and ate potato chips. But I tried to structure it. It was very interesting to pull together a course with the role of the executive branch—the role of all the different executive branches: the role of the president, the role of the Supreme

Court, the role of public opinion, the role of the State Department overseas, and the CIA overseas. Got into the role of intelligence.

Q: Lobbyists?

OSTRANDER: Absolutely. That was on the Congressional side, of course, and the people speaking. Such a huge subject, you start to realize. And trying to get readings for it. The role of tradition and mindset; that was fascinating. As a matter of fact, that whole thing of tradition and mindset got me to thinking. I wish somebody would give a course in what that role is in the Soviet Union. I wish I understood, because unless you understand that about a people, how are you going to understand how your foreign policy is going to fall on their ears?

I went through all of that in about the first, oh, I've forgotten how many weeks, and then reserved the last weeks for separate issues—the global issues, and one of those was population. Another one was the morality of such things as bombing; the morality of our intelligence gathering. So anyway, I think I gave the students something to think about. Went into the Middle East problems.

Q: Well, it really could go in any direction, couldn't it?

OSTRANDER: Any direction you want. At the same time I was lecturing all over the state again. I did not leave Indianapolis, however, in February and March, because the roads were so snow-covered that I thought that was ridiculous.

Q: Did you get a good press?

OSTRANDER: Oh, yes. Got a lot of those news articles. Got a big press. And that's one of the reasons I told them back here at FSI—they have always hesitated to send people back to their home towns, but they should not. I already had all the contacts since my family was from there. The fact that a hometown girl had made good drew all kinds of interest.

I think they now don't mind doing it. You know, what I think they're afraid of is that you're going to retire on the spot and leave them high and dry, and I think a couple of them did.

Then when I came back, I came back unassigned, and again I had volunteered for a promotion panel in case I didn't have anything to do. While I was doing that, they were trying to place me, and I must say, I found a lot more effort at this point. Bill [William D.] Wolle was head of seniors, and I think he really had my best interests at heart. I had felt for a long time that I was just a problem to them, and nobody really cared. They just wished I'd go away. I didn't feel that with him. And I had worked with Personnel long enough to know exactly what the problems were with me. You know, where would I place me? It's not easy, and I was fully aware of that.

He called me up one day, and he talked me into taking a job running PE—Performance Evaluation. I did not want that job. I was perfectly willing to go back into placement, in his office, as a matter of fact. Although I'd loved to have had his job, I was perfectly willing to take one of those other jobs, but they came up with this PE thing, and I did not want that job. I can't imagine a less glamorous, more hardworking, more difficult, thankless job in the world than running Performance Evaluation. Also seeing a lot of things that were going to have to be done there, and the negotiations with AFSA [American Foreign Service Association]. This has got to be awful.

Well, I went home and spent a week talking myself into that job, and Wolle said, “Look, whether you want it or not, you're going to get this job.” But I had also been over at INR [Bureau of Intelligence and Research] looking at some things, and they had called me in to talk to me about some things, so I said, “I'll be back Thursday night before panels and tell you.” I went home and talked myself into it: “This is where you're needed, your background is in personnel. Maybe this is good. At least it will give you a desk, and it's your last assignment before retirement.” This sort of thing. So I went in and I said, “Okay.”

Well, in the meantime, something happened, because they put Betty Jane Jones in that job. Wolle called me in Friday afternoon and he said, “I don't know what's happened, but they've put Betty Jane Jones in that job.” And left me there with no explanation, no nothing.

I thought, “With counselors like this over in personnel who needs enemies? This is so inconsiderate.” I, at least, would have called in and said, “Look, they want Betty Jane Jones in the job; you're off the hook,” or said something! I never, ever, heard one word on that. Never once has anybody said,”Sorry,” or anything. After saying, “Put her in it, force her in it.” I think this is pretty awful!

So what did I do? Oh, before that, I had come back from Indianapolis just in time for the TWA hijacking, and I volunteered for that task force. And went on the consular side of that, and then Joan Clark asked me after a couple of weeks on that if I would go open a new task force over at the White House, since it was continuing, and I did that.

So that was a marvelous experience, being over there and seeing how the White House works. I don't think I'd better say more than that, except that every woman over there looked just like Nancy Reagan: size four, Adolpho suits. I thought “I'll never fit in over here.” You know what occurs to me, I think that's unconscious over there. I think it's Hollywood. I think that they would never dream of putting anybody in a job over there that wasn't . . .

Q: Out of Central Casting.

OSTRANDER: Out of Central Casting. And that's just part of the job.

Anyway, I went from there to the promotion panel. Then one day, Mark Dion—Bill Wolle was on vacation, and Mark was holding down the shop—exactly a year ago. Called me in and told me about several jobs and mentioned this one. This job had been vacant since the reversal of policy in Mexico City, when the view from here was not that of the White

House, and Dick Benedict had been relieved of his duties because of that. So this job had been vacant. But John Negroponte had just been assigned as assistant secretary and had made it known that he intended to refill this position that had drawn a lot of flack from some very conservative congressmen and other groups.

My reaction was, “You've got to be out of your mind. Population policy and the abortion issue are related. Nobody in his right mind would walk into this trap, because you're going to be shot out of the water just like Dick Benedict was no matter what happens.” So I said, “Just forget that. Just no way, shape, or form. But John wanted somebody who already had ambassadorial rank.

I was frightened because my own feelings about abortion are that it's a personal choice, and what the White House was saying domestically was something that I might have trouble with. But then I got to looking into this, and realized that not since the early seventies have we had anything to do with any program overseas that involved abortion, so it simply wasn't going to come up, and there was no problem because I disagreed with the administration's views, because it was already set by law when you get into the overseas thing.

So when that was taken off of me I began to realize that I really feel that in the long-term, population and its rise and its growth in the Third World is probably our most important long-term global issue. I am convinced of that. And the more I thought about it the more I thought, “This is made for you.” They can't harm me. I can just retire, and maybe I'll go out with a bang. Maybe make some points if I have to leave. I am convinced it's the most important issue in today's world. I think as a woman you can probably get away with more on this issue, and people think of it as an issue that, even though it's terribly important, does concern women. And there are many issues that are very important, but people think, “Ah, that's too important for a woman.”

Anyway, the more I thought about it, the more I realized how important I think it is, and yet I feel that I can be unemotional over it, and you don't want anybody in this job who's going to get too emotional on this issue, because you can't do the job then. It's a job where you're just going to have to listen to all kinds of views, and be open to all kinds of views, and handle them as best you can, knowing very well what the long-term interest of the United States is, and trying to separate that from some pretty short-range domestic ideas. So anyway, I got to thinking about it and began to think it's too important a job for anybody else in the world to have besides me, so I went back in and told them that I would certainly want to throw my hat in the ring for it. There were a couple of others, I think, in it. Then I talked to Dick Smith— I interviewed up here. John was away at the time.

Q: Who's Dick Smith?

OSTRANDER: He's the senior deputy to John [in OES] [Bureau of Oceans and International Environment and Scientific Affairs]. I got the feeling in talking to Dick that I would be their first choice, but it wasn't until John got back that he told me I definitely was. I was paneled and put into the job.

Which brings up a sort of concluding thing that I wanted to be sure to say, and that was that every job I've ever had, I thought was the most important and interesting one I'd ever had. Which I think is fascinating; maybe it's just my character. But I really do feel that this job is much more important to the long-range interests of the United States, even over my ambassadorial assignment. I think it's just right for me. Idealistically, I am working for something I really believe in, and I don't think there are too many people who would be willing to do this job. I think it came at the right time for me. It's perfect for my last assignment. It even opens up things beyond the Foreign Service.

I am on the Hill often. I'm getting to know a lot of people up there, and I've always wanted to do that and never had an opportunity. Not for any personal purposes, but just because I

find that side of government fascinating, even though I've never had a chance to get into it all. I had lunch with Ted Turner the other day.

Q: Did you? Do you testify much on the Hill?

OSTRANDER: I haven't yet, and I hope I'm not asked to. I would rather advise than testify on the Hill. I don't want to be seen as an advocate at all, because then I've closed myself off from one group or another, any way I go. I did go up and meet with a group of congressmen and their staffers at a luncheon that was given by the American Academy for the Advancement of Science. They asked me to come sit at the speakers' table—I had pneumonia at the time—and I suddenly was a speaker. All I was supposed to do was go up and have lunch. I went because I had an opportunity to meet so many of the people that I'd heard about.

The man sitting next to me was the chief speaker. Do you know, it was McGeorge Bundy! He spent all his time saying, “Oh, I've never met a woman ambassador. Wait till I get home and tell my wife; she'll be so thrilled.” And I thought, “This is McGeorge Bundy who says he's thrilled to meet me, and here I am, just drooling!”

It's this sort of opportunity that I've never had before, and it's just really wonderful. I go to all kinds of meetings.

Q: How do you see your role? As an advisor? Mediator?

OSTRANDER: Yes, coordinator. There are seventy-seven organizations in this town that have to do with population, that need to talk to government, and that are in this part of the world; New York and North Carolina and here. Not to mention government agencies that touch on this: the National Institutes of Health and their contraceptive research, Health and Human Services, EPA and the Center for Environmental Quality and all these quasi-government groups, all the foundations that are involved. They all need to talk to government, and they need an office. I see everything from their groups that has to do

with population. If I see something that they should know about, I can make sure that they get it, and vice versa, if they want to let the government know something and don't know where to go.

So I see my role as coordinator, as somebody they can all talk to, and for that reason I must not advocate; I must be open for everyone. Primarily the role, of course, as advisor to the government, to the Secretary of State, to the head of AID, to the President of the United States, if they ask for it. They haven't been asking for it; they're frightened of this subject. They just wish it would go away.

I hope that the people will speak so clearly in the next election that they won't be afraid of it anymore, that instead of guessing what people are thinking, they'll have some idea. We all hope for that. I hope for everybody to know that I am here, if they have questions about population. And there have been some of those, now.

Q: Do you send out many brochures? Do you prepare brochures?

OSTRANDER: No, I do not, but I get them from everywhere, and let people know where they can get them, and supply them if there are such things available.

I also need to travel a lot, to get to see what the problems of the Third World are in the way of population, what our approach should be. AID does the programs, but there should be somebody who can guide the desks, and I'm talking about the State Department desks. There is something beyond programs.

For instance, when I went to Brazil—I had gone to Mexico first, and seen how important it is that the government of Mexico is so involved in their population efforts. On the other hand, the government of Brazil has done everything to encourage population growth. The government isn't involved there at all, because of the church. It seemed to me we [the U.S.] should probably, through the desks, be encouraging the government to make population [programs].

Well, I got down there and found differently. I now would consider that wrong. Brazil is sort of like the United States of America: they are so diverse in their ways, and each person has his own views, and it doesn't make any difference that the government stays out of the issue; there is a demand for those programs. So if you get it into the government, the president is going to have to choose between the [the state] and church, and he's not going to make that choice. You're going to get a negative answer. Best thing to do is let the people alone. There is a demand for services. Get the programs going, let the people demand and then get their services, but leave them alone. If you don't want a no for an answer, don't ask the question. It's that sort of thing.

Q: What do you do in a country where there's a crying need for it, but because of their traditions, the men won't permit any contraceptive devices?

OSTRANDER: Well, AID does get into that sort of thing. They come up with programs and then contract out the programs. There is what we call the IE & C, which is Information, Education, and Communication. There is a demand among the women, no matter what. Somebody told me that AID claims there are 600 million people out there that want to be able to plan families. And they're including men and women. But the governments usually put up half the cost, you know; we're paying very little for this, and we never go in unless we're requested.

Q: Is it the policy of the [Reagan] White House that we not supply contraceptives, that we not do anything about population?

OSTRANDER: Oh, no. For the last twenty years, AID has really been out there and doing a fine job. In the current administration, if you say, “family planning”, everybody is a hundred percent in back of you. If you say “abortion”—if the shadow of abortion comes up first, then nobody will even look at it. In those countries that you talk about, where the men are definitely not in favor of it—I just don't think there are all that many.

For instance, you know, the Muslim countries, where there's more than one wife, and the women really vie with each other to have the most babies in those countries, talking to the men been most productive—or unproductive!

Q: Vasectomies, you mean?

OSTRANDER: Getting them to use condoms, getting them to try to plan their families, this sort of thing.

It's one of those things that I find fascinating, is that there's just no one solution. You have to go to every country and every culture, and each one is different, and what applies here isn't going to apply there, and so you better know all these countries.

Q: Look at what the Chinese are doing.

OSTRANDER: Oh, dear.

Q: Draconian!

OSTRANDER: Well, yes. And that of course has stopped us from giving any money to the United Nations Fund for Population Affairs [UNFPA].

Q: Is it true they put the girls out to die? That they really expose them?

OSTRANDER: Well, the Chinese always have done that, but I think it's better now. I think it's much better now. But we don't really have the statistics. No, that doesn't seem to worry people so much as forcing women into having abortions, which is what the perception is. Whether that's true or not, is another thing. I suspect there are some cases where you get some local people who say, “This is our quota.” They do talk to the women, but it's just nothing like what we perceive here. But we backed out of UNFPA, we pulled all our money

out of UNFPA, and to heck with all those other countries that need it. That just happened just two years ago. Which I think is too bad.

Q: What do you see down the road for you? You'll have this job how long?

OSTRANDER: It's a two-year assignment, but I'm going to ask for another year. Then I doubt I'll get an LCE. They're simply not giving LCEs to senior officers who have the maximum time in. So I'm intending to retire in September of 1988, which is when my time will be up. I don't know what I'll do then. I think I'll stick around and get the apartment ready to be rented and then go on out to Indiana.

Q: You own your own apartment here?

OSTRANDER: Yes. I'm going to keep it, and I'm thinking now that perhaps I'll rent it. Twice, professors coming from overseas to teach at Georgetown have asked to rent my apartment, furnished.

Q: Is it in Georgetown, your place?

OSTRANDER: It's just north, by the Cathedral. It's a gorgeous place, the Chesterfield. I'm on the eighth floor up there, and I love it. I think it's a good area. I thought if I could rent that for enough to pay for the mortgage and a little over, then I could come back and spend summers in Washington.

Q: So you're not going to sever your ties?

OSTRANDER: No. I've loved having both places, and as long as I can keep that up, I'd like it. I adore Washington, but I like my roots out there. Now if my housekeeper out there dies, I just don't know if I'll be able to handle that big house out there by myself, and so I'll probably end up selling it, and then I don't know what I'll do.

Q: Do you want to travel?

OSTRANDER: Oh, you bet. Of course. Oh, I want to be a tourist. It's been my lifelong ambition to be a tourist!

Q: Where especially do you want to travel to?

OSTRANDER: The only thing I've known is that I want to return to all my old haunts at least once. I do want to go back and see the places. Of course, I can't go back to Cuba, and I've been back to Mexico twice, so I won't have to worry with that. But I've not been back to Jamaica. I've never been back to northern Europe, where I spent seven years, and I want to do that so much. I want to go back to Suriname.

Q: Do you plan to look for any more jobs? You mentioned teaching.

OSTRANDER: No. I wouldn't mind a part-time thing. I don't want another career at all. Oh, Lord, no.

Q: Do you plan to do any volunteer work?

OSTRANDER: Possibly. I would like to. We have a new zoo, going in in Indianapolis, and I've already put out some inquiries about taking care of their tropical birds. I'd love to do that. The new zoo won't be completed until about the time I arrive, so I think that'll work out very nicely.

I really think this last job, as far as I'm concerned, is the most satisfying I've had as far as feeling like I'm doing something for the good of humanity, for the good of women, for the good of babies. When you see the difference in the health of the women and the children when their families are spaced! When they want to do it and you are helping them to be able to do it, and thus, the country is so much stronger. So I don't know, maybe something in the population field will be there. I certainly always will be interested in that, and I do know that so many of the large population groups can always use somebody out in the boonies. I don't know about going to work. It's going to depend on what I can afford—if I

need to work. I may need to work, but I just have no idea. If I can rent the place back here, and get that mortgage paid for, why, I'm fine. So it's going to depend on that.

Q: Could you give me your advice to young women coming along, who might want a career in the Foreign Service?

OSTRANDER: Oh, my. How about in any career?

Q: All right.

OSTRANDER: This sounds really Pollyanna-ish, but I have never done a job halfway. I think this is something that my mother taught me: If you're going to do it, give it your all. I have always tried to be the best person in that job that was ever in it, and that goes from filing, to typing, to being ambassador, to being coordinator for population affairs. Just do it better than anybody else ever has.

Now I've not always succeeded, because I'm sure there have been people in the jobs I've had that have done it better, but I have certainly always tried to do that. And don't turn your nose up at it just because it's a little filing job, or something. I can remember that the background I got in The Hague, running their mail room over there, was really what gave me the background that I needed to be Ambassador to Suriname.

Especially in the Foreign Service, when you're moving around a lot, there's just absolutely no dead-end job. It just doesn't exist, and don't sit there and think, “This is a backwater post, and nobody knows it's here.” There's nobody who's ever going to tell me there's a dead-end job in the Foreign Service. I never knew a good Foreign Service officer, a good one, who didn't do a bang-up job whether he considered it stamping visas, or whatever. The really good ones seem to milk every job for what it's worth, and never consider that it's beneath them.

There were junior officers assigned to me in Jamaica, and if there was ever a visa mill, that was it. One of those junior officers took it upon himself to get to know all the young people at his church and all the young people in the political parties in Jamaica, and I don't think he'd been there six months before he was turning in all of the information and the intelligence on political feelings among the youth, in the youth groups. The other one was quite a musician, and she had contacts in the music world, and she did sort of the same thing. They were never assigned to do these things. They just used the contacts that they had to do things that they wanted to, anyway. They learned the languages better than anybody else, and they never missed an opportunity to use it. They were stamping visas, but they were also learning about immigration law. They were interviewing refugees, boat people from Cuba, and turning in intelligence from that.

More advice would be and I quote Martin Herz on this in his book about being an ambassador: He said that when he came into the Foreign Service, he asked this friend of his what it was he wanted in the Foreign Service, and the fellow junior officer said, “Power.” And he told this fellow officer, “Looking back on that, I would say this to you: If you want power, go for elective office, because you're not going to get it in the Foreign Service. But if you want a way of life that is forever fascinating, stick with the Foreign Service. Also, if you want to be in a position to influence policy, become an ambassador, but that's as close as you're going to get to power.” But there is no doubt in his mind, and there is none in mine, that as a Foreign Service officer, you do have the opportunity to influence policy. It may not go the way you want, but you do have that opportunity. Forget about power, it's not there. But a marvelous way of life is certainly there. And let me say this: if you're the kind of person that's absolutely going to be destroyed because you don't get to be the president of the company, stay out of the Foreign Service, because not everybody, and very few, are going to make it to the top. But if you're going to love those years for the marvelous opportunities they afford that you're not going to get in any other kind of job, why go for it. Stick with the Foreign Service, and enjoy every minute of it. Make sure you understand that you may not make it to the Senior Service, because I think it's

probably going to be that way in the future. But there are a lot of people out there in the big wide world that don't make it to be president of the firm either. See how many of them love every minute of their work, and you're going to find very few of them do. I think you'll find most people in the Foreign Service do love it.

I have interviewed I don't know how many when I was in personnel who said, “Don't you realize that by this policy or by that new policy they're going to desert the Foreign Service by the thousands? You can't treat people like this.” I have never in thirty-eight—almost thirty-nine—years seen them deserting the Foreign Service in droves. There is something there—no matter what the personnel system does—that they love.

Q: What do you think the chances are for women?

OSTRANDER: For women? Oh, that can only get better, because so long as the numbers are increasing in the lower ranks, it can only get better with an old girls' net, and there isn't one now. Those of us in my generation, we were so old by the time we got to be senior officers, that there's no way we could have an old girls' net. We're too old; we're retired almost immediately after we get to the highest ranks.

Q: Do you think there will be an old girls' network, or do you think it's going to be absorbed and become part of the old boys' network?

OSTRANDER: Well, any woman who doesn't consider women for the positions over which she has control, is pretty bad.

Q: I mean, do you think it will be all one system then?

OSTRANDER: Oh, I live for that day, and of course, that's the ideal, that there isn't any sex in it; that it's just an old people's net.

Q: Rozanne Ridgway always says she's part of the old boys' network.

OSTRANDER: Does she? Maybe she is.

Q: It seems to have happened in that European political cone, at least as far as she's concerned. She may be an anomaly.

OSTRANDER: I think if you're part of any net, and you're up there at this point, it's got to be the old boys', because there isn't any old girls'. There just simply isn't one. I like to think that I have friends among the old boys, too. I can't think of any old girls except for Roz and Joan. [Laughter]

Q: There aren't very many of you, not in the senior ranks.

OSTRANDER: Sure aren't.

Q: What about the Foreign Service Act of 1980, and the way it's squishing people through, and not too many are going to get into the senior ranks. Do you think that's going to bother entrants, or perhaps not when they enter, but after a few years, it'll bother them? If they look ahead and think, "Gee, maybe I'm not going to make it, maybe I'd better get out before too many years have gone by."

OSTRANDER: If that happens to the men, it's going to happen to the women. I don't think there's going to be any difference for the men or the women, on that score, but I do worry about what it's going to do to the Foreign Service. What they've got to have is a thirty-five year career, and if they have to slow promotions down to get that—They're going to have to provide for about thirty-five years, and I think that any government agency—any service does.

Q: Now they're guaranteeing twenty-five.

OSTRANDER: I know, but I think it's got to be longer than that.

Q: Makes it more like the military.

OSTRANDER: I don't think we should ever use the military as a model.

Q: That means you've got to have two careers.

OSTRANDER: That's right. I don't think any self-respecting organization plans on their people having two careers, if they're professionals.

Q: You think the fact that people want a long career; they'd rather have that security than they would the chance to get a shot at the top.

OSTRANDER: Right. I think they would rather have something that gives them thirty-five years of service, even if it goes just up to the O-1 level, with somewhere in there a shot at spending the last ten years at the senior level. I think people, when they come into the Foreign Service, want a lifetime career.

Q: What about these extensions, LCEs? Are they pretty hard on morale?

OSTRANDER: You want my own opinion on that? I haven't talked to other people about it, but I just want to say, “You're looking at me and deciding whether or not you want me for three whole years, well, bully for you!” It really is a putdown. You put yourself in this position of scrambling like crazy over other bodies for another measly three years after you've already given them thirty-eight, and they should be welcoming your experience.

Q: That'll change, don't you think?

OSTRANDER: Oh, I think so. I think so. Although I think that it's quite right that there comes a time when you haven't got that much more to offer. I think I've got a lot to offer in this job, and whether or not at the end of three years I'll still have anything more to offer is another thing. I don't at this time feel that I will have, except that this job is kind of unique, and it may be that in three years you've just begun to get the “in” with all these groups

and to get the reputation in the field. Because it is a mafia, there is a population mafia out there, and you've got to belong.

Q: What do you think the effect of terrorism is going to be?

OSTRANDER: All I know is that every time there's a terrorist attack on Foreign Service people, the number of people trying to get into the Foreign Service grows like crazy, just shoots up, so I can't see that that has stopped at the recruitment level. Maybe it gives it a little romantic flair. I think it's another thing after you've passed your, maybe, fortieth birthday, and you see your wife and children—except I suppose you can always leave them at home, but that's not fun either. I would worry if I were a family person, but surely you're not going to worry as a junior officer: it's not going to happen to you; it just makes it all the more exciting! That's crazy. There's nothing exciting about being held in Tehran for a couple of years.

Are you asking what it's going to do to the morale of the people in it, or what it's going to do to the profession, because how can you do your job as a diplomat when you can't get out of the compound? I think maybe we had better come back here and have telexes, sitting in the foreign offices, or something. We can talk to them through the telex. I think we are going to have to cut down on our embassies overseas, but not on our State Department people so much, because I think State Department has been pared down pretty much to the bone. I don't know how we could get many fewer. Q: Is the open assignment system working?

OSTRANDER: I don't think it works at all. I don't think it gets the right person into the right job. It may get some career officer into a post that he's longed for and into a job he thinks is right for him. I don't know. I think we need a service that has professional personnel people coming up with career plans—and I'm not talking about other Foreign Service people—I'm talking about professional personnel people, even if they're civil service, that

know something about Foreign Service, to plan careers so that we will have absolutely the most superlative ranks of seniors that's possible.

Can you imagine any sort of business—of course, we're not a business—but any sort of business that's run where they let the employees decide what jobs they'll take? That doesn't mean that they're qualified for that job. It doesn't mean that's what the company needs to get them to be the most productive, to lead the most useful lives in their careers. No.

I think, certainly, you don't get the most out of a person if he's in a post that he hates. You know, back in the old days, we used to have a personnel officer who looked at a post as a whole, and from secretaries to clerks, all the way up to ambassador, those were people who complemented each other and could work as a group, and were a real viable entity. This guy is an economic officer, this one is an economic officer, but this one is a specialist in petroleum affairs, and this one is a specialist in something else, and they'll work together. As it is now, the petroleum specialist and this guy probably didn't want to go to the same post, and so they don't go.

I don't think the government profits from it. It's almost a chicken way out, because when you don't get selected for the Senior Service now, you can only say, “I made a mistake. I shouldn't have put that as my first choice.” Whereas in my day, you looked back and you could think, “Boy, the government really loused me up by sending me to that place.” So it's almost a chicken way of managing. The management is not going to be suable.

I hope the pendulum goes back the other way. When I was down in personnel that last stint, and I would come up with an assignment for somebody that was just right for their career, and they would say things like, “Oh, but I have a cat and I can't go to Jamaica.” And I used to think, my God! I had cats when I was assigned to Jamaica, and I sent them to my home in Indiana because it would never occur to me to have the government worry in their assignment system over my cat.

But they just come up with all these reasons why you'd better come up with a better assignment than that. And then they say—and the bottom line is—”That's certainly not first choice on my list.”

How can you expect a personnel system to work? I would just throw in the towel if I were over there now. The only thing you've got down there to broker with, is to call up these people and say, “Look, these are the reasons you should take that job, damn it. You'd better put that number one on your list.” But if this person isn't willing to take advice on what's good for his career” if he says, “Well, I've been looking at the careers of all these ambassadors, and they all had to serve in the Near East,” I don't know. It just doesn't make sense to me.

You know, what it almost seems to me like they're working toward, is some sort of an efficiency report, that when it comes back in you can computerize, and then after you get them all computerized you punch a button, and your promotion list leaps out. This guy, according to the computer, met whatever was programmed into it for what you're working toward.

Therefore, when the assignment process comes up, you're also going to feed somebody's career into the computer and the next assignment is going to pop out—untouched by human hands. It just seems to me they want to take the whole human element out of it, and I think that has come from this grievance procedure, because who in his right mind wants to run a program where he's going to spend most of his life defending himself against somebody who's aggrieved? Although I understand you cannot grieve an assignment.

Q: Somebody's got to go to these posts that aren't supposed to be so good.

OSTRANDER: And I think, unfortunately, on the married couples, tandem assignments, we've just built in a problem for ourselves. There's just no way.

Q: Would you go so far as to say this is a good career for a single woman?

OSTRANDER: Of course, I would have to say yes to that. I think it's superb. I think it's absolutely ideal.

Q: But not such a good career for a married woman?

OSTRANDER: Well, she's sure going to have to make some choices, and she had better be well aware of what those choices are. Because the day is going to come where she's going to have to choose between her family and her career. I think that's just all there is to it. Is she willing to do that? If she's willing to do that, fine. I would find that impossible. Well, I'd go with my family, there's no doubt in my mind, but I'm another generation. But if you're not going to do that, you're just going to have to give up your family.

And yet I talk to some of them, and they're fully expecting the United States government to manage to—one of them that I met in Monterey, whose husband was in the Air Force, gave me a list of the places where the Air Force could send her husband, and her personnel officer was supposed to get in touch with the Air Force and work it out. Then another one was married to a British Foreign Service officer, and she was expecting personnel back in Washington to work through the British foreign office to get a tandem assignment worked out. This to me is just—

Q: It's a whole new mentality, isn't it?

OSTRANDER: It certainly is. I was grateful for everything Uncle Sam gave me—the child of the Depression that I am—I was grateful for it. There were some things that weren't ideal about it, absolutely not ideal, but it would still never occur to me to dump my own personal problems on the U.S. government and ask them to solve them. And that's what they're doing these days. That's what they do.

Q: As the magazines say, they want it all. Well, they won't get it of course. As long as they're well aware of the fact that they won't get it, things will be all right, but otherwise—they can't come up against the United States government.

OSTRANDER: Well, there's one thing, it's something now that they know about, and it's something that they'll have to discuss before they get married. I always kind of felt sorry for that group that was in between, that, “this wasn't in the bargain at all when we got married, and suddenly it is. It's just one of those things that has occurred and we never had a chance to discuss it.”

Q: The times got ahead of us, and we have to catch up.

OSTRANDER: That's right.

Q: I thank you so much, it has been a terrific interview. I appreciate it.

OSTRANDER: I hope you get something out of it.

Q: Oh, I got a great deal out of it.

End of interview